FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Future



ENERGISE YOUR

SCI-FI ART

Target new skills! Ground your futuristic art in reality, with cover artist **Admira Wijaya**

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RALPH BAKSHI SALUTES **IAN MILLER'S** "NO TRICKS, OLD MASTER GREATNESS"

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Welcome...
to fantasy made reality



When your imagination takes flight it can be hard to ground. It's a problem that all artists face, so in this issue Admira Wijaya demonstrates how he uses real-world reference to make his mechs believable. Read Admira's workshop on page 72 to discover the processes he uses to give his sci-fi art added realism.

Elsewhere in this issue our workshop artists pursue all manner of interpretations of sci-fi art, from Serge Birault's retro pin-up of Barbarella on page 76 to Clint Cearley's cold-coloured mechanical wizard on page 98. Nick Harris goes a step further on page 80 to explore his goblins-in-space theme using SketchBook Pro, all the time ensuring that the rules of perspective, proportion and colour ground his chaotic fantasy in reality.

While it's true that fantasy art needs some sense of reality, our lead interview this issue spotlights an artist who pushes the eccentricities of the genre to its limits. Ian Miller is one of a kind. Starting on page 48 you can explore Ian's stunning pen and ink art, and share in animator Ralph Bakshi's awe of the artist's unique imagination.

Ralph was so impressed that he gave Ian a job, and this could happen to you this issue. Japan's CROOZ is an upcoming video game publisher which is seeking new artists to design and paint card art for its largest game franchise, Deity Wars. Read our feature on page 20 and contact the studio with your portfolio. The CROOZ art team is waiting to hear from you!

Ian

Ian Dean, Editor
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Our special cover for subscribers this issue.



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Featured artists

ImagineFX brings together some of the world's finest artists to share their techniques and inspiration for creating stunning artwork



Ian Miller



After graduating from St Martin's School of Art in 1970, Ian published his first art book in 1976 and has since been active in the film, comic and book industries, including work on the films Shrek, Cool World and Wizards. We catch up with Ian this issue to discuss his career and gain insights into the artist's unique imagination. Discover Ian's paintings on page 48.

www.ian-miller.org



Terryl Whitlatch



Star Wars artist and respected Paleoartist Terryl shares her insights and processes into developing an alien race. From an early idea, she creates a species, culture and world before exploring the anatomy of Earth's animals to construct her imagined creature. On page 62 discover Terryl's detailed anatomy drawings and be inspired to create your own creatures.

www.talesofamalthea.com



Serge Birault



A multiple award-winning pin-up artist, Serge takes a break from his busy schedule illustrating for adverts, video games and the music industry to dip his stylus into the colourful world of 1960s French comics and the sexual revolution. Serge's sci-fi art adventure sees him paint his unique take on cult comic heroine Barbarella. Turn to page 76 for his workshop.

www.sergebirault.fr



Nick Harris



A regular of ImagineFX, Nick has been a professional illustrator for children's books for over 20 years. Now working digitally as well as traditionally, Nick seeks out new and often cheap software to experiment with. This issue Nick offers a beginner's guide to the workings of Autodesk's Sketchbook Pro. Start your journey in this accessible tool on page 80.

www.nickillus.com



Max Kostenko



Max is a professional character designer for video games. He lives in Moscow and works in the advertising industry. Giving a character personality is always difficult, and so in his workshop on page 86 Max reveals how best to create a unique, dramatic expression for your own characters, by applying subtle changes to the face and altering the lighting of the scene. Fascinating stuff!

www.max-kostenko.com



Clint Cearley



Having trained as a traditional artist Clint now works a digital fantasy illustrator for leading companies such as Wizards of the Coast, creating detailed art for Magic: The Gathering. Clint is also the author of The 10 Most Common Mistakes in Digital Painting and their Solutions, so who better to create a workshop this issue on resurrecting an old, unloved sketch? Read Clint's workshop on page 98.

www.clintcearley.com



Cover artist

Dynamic lighting and a love of technology ensure that rising star Admira Wijaya is the right choice to paint this issue's mech cover!



Admira Wijaya

COUNTRY: Indonesia
SOFTWARE: Photoshop
WEB: www.bit.ly/admirawijaya

Based in Malang, East Java, Admira founded his own company, Chekydot Studio and now employs 12 artists. He provides art for comics, storyboards, concept design and poster art and has recently created cover art and internal illustrations for DC's new Batgirl comic. Turn to page 72 to see Admira's cover workshop.



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In progress

How Admira assembled our fire-fighting mech



Work begins as Admira brainstorms a pose that will work on our cover. Mechs are a difficult form to read, so he adds the focus of a female pilot. Now we need to choose a pose. We settle on one that's dynamic, but doesn't clutter the masthead (the bit that says ImagineFX in big letters).



We place the rough sketch on our cover and begin to experiment with the placement of cover lines, noticing how Admira's humanoid mech design sits against the masthead. The use of the pilot ensures that the image has a focal point to build our cover design around.



Admira's final painting is amazing – so good in fact, that we need to rejig our design so as not to cover up the detailed mech elements and fiery environment. His take on a near-future emergency vehicle makes for a stunning cover!

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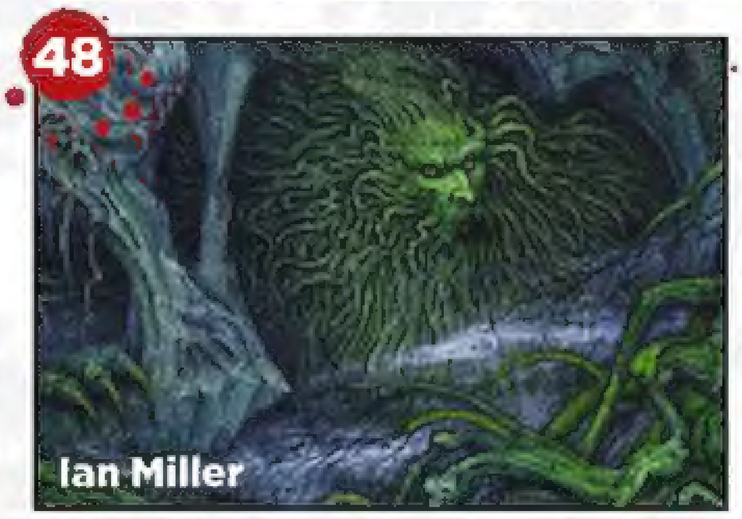


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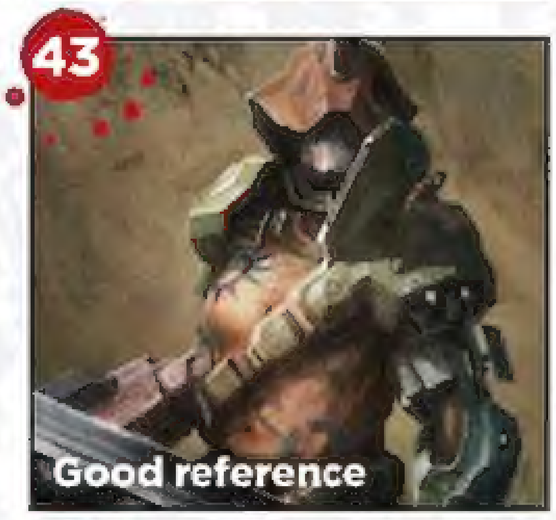


See page 8 for the best new art

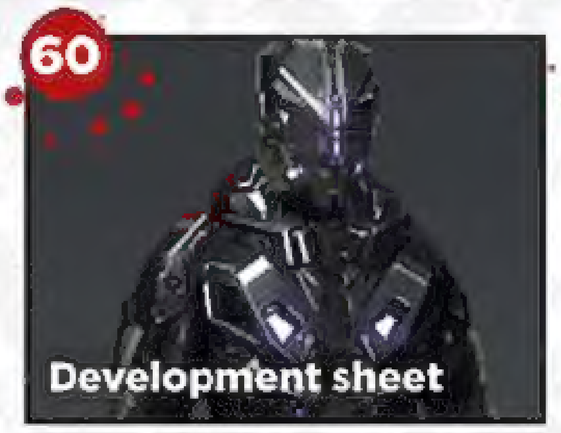


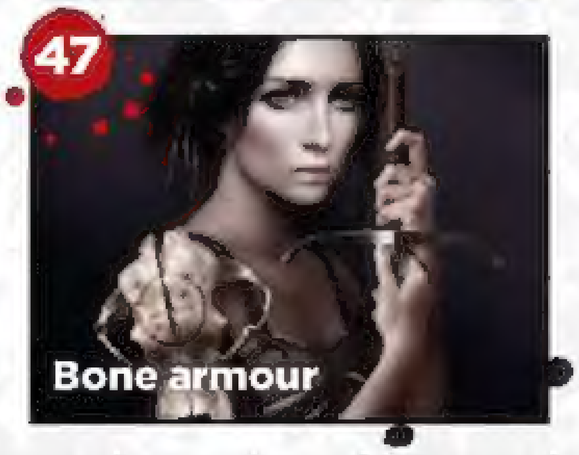












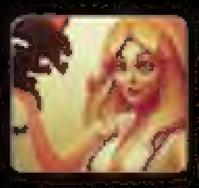
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Advice and techniques from pro artists...



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Admira Wijaya paints a mech for our cover.



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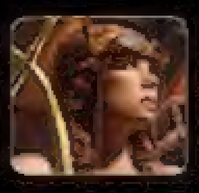
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Reader FXPosé

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storemags.com

ImagineFX ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Joshua Cairós Gonzalez
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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Working as a freelance illustrator at the tender age of 20 is a dream come true for Joshua, who's been interested in the arts since childhood. "I used to attend oil-painting lessons, but when I was around 16 I was introduced to digital painting with my first Bamboo tablet."

Ever since his digital discovery, Joshua has been hooked on the art form. "As time passed, I studied further and devoted much of my time to getting to grips with digital painting. And now I'm a freelance illustrator, creating book covers and illustrations for role-playing games." Even as a professional, Joshua continues to be inspired by the learning process faced by freelance artists.



1 EN PELIGRO "This painting was created for the latest exposition from Hysterical Minds, which plays with complementary colour schemes. For example, the green colours of the woods contrast with the magenta of the creatures."

2 HOPELESS "This illustration was a commission for a role-playing game, and was to be an internal illustration for a guide. It was later used as an advertising poster for the book."



ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Congratulations Joshua – you've won yourself a copy of Exposé 10 and d'artiste: Character Design! To find out more about these two great books, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

Artist crit

Freelance concept artist Mike Corriero likes the amount of storytelling in Joshua's art



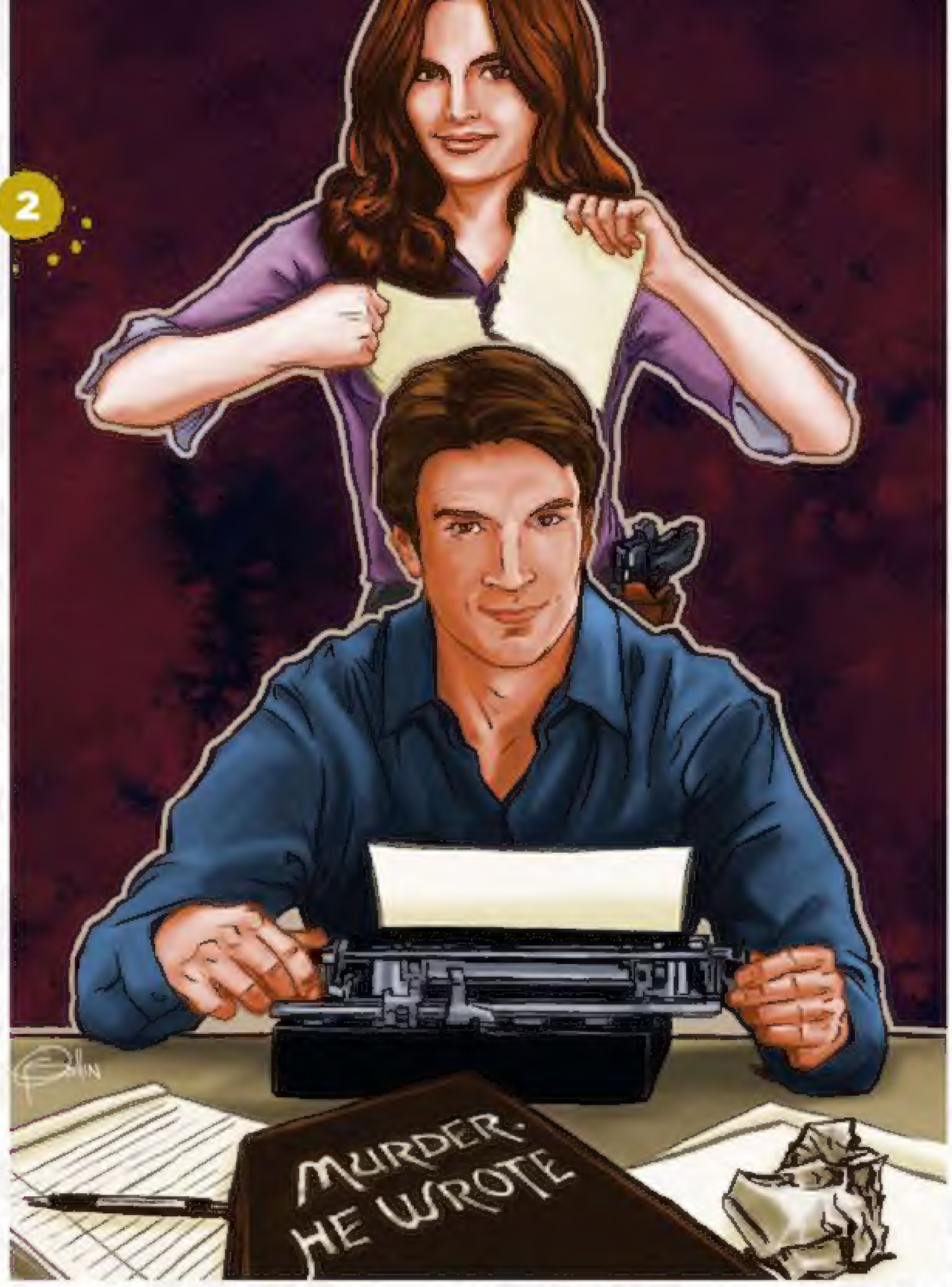
"I love how we see this glowing guardian angel coming out of nowhere, ready to take a fiery blade to the villain by protecting the faceless man in the foreground."

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1



2



Patrick Scullin

LOCATION: US
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SOFTWARE: Traditional, Photoshop, Painter



As a multi award-winning illustrator and member of prestigious circles including the Graphic Artist's Guild and the Society of Illustrators, Patrick's artistic career has seen him take on the roles of business owner, freelance artist and staff designer for advertising and creative agencies.

"My style is a blend of traditional drawing, inking, painting and digital colouring effects. Comic books played a large part in my development as an artist and illustrator."

Patrick's style combines traditional and digital art forms, with a focus on the human figure and portraits. The mixture of styles is also reflected in his artistic influences, with John Singer Sargent, Alphonse Mucha and Adam Hughes among Patrick's favourite artists.

3



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Patrick gives us a nice pulpy take on familiar heroes and heroines. His bold use of colour and tone really catches your eye, and he's got a great sense of character and expression. I can't wait to see more."
Beren Neale, Features Editor

1 CAPTAIN MARVEL "This fan art is inspired by Kelly Sue Deconnick's description of the new Captain Marvel, Carol Danvers. She describes her as a "female Chuck Yeager", the famous America test pilot. Pictured in the background are famous female pilots."

2 CASTLE "This is fan art dedicated to the ABC television show Castle, which follows the adventures of a mystery writer and his policewoman partner. It's a combination of traditional pencil and ink, and digital painting."

3 STREAMPUNK 02 "This was inspired by the novel The Anubis Gates by Tim Powers. Here, the elegant lady and the adventurous heroine are contrasted, with a warm colour palette and costumes setting the story's timeframe."

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

Irina Sunradio Kuzmin

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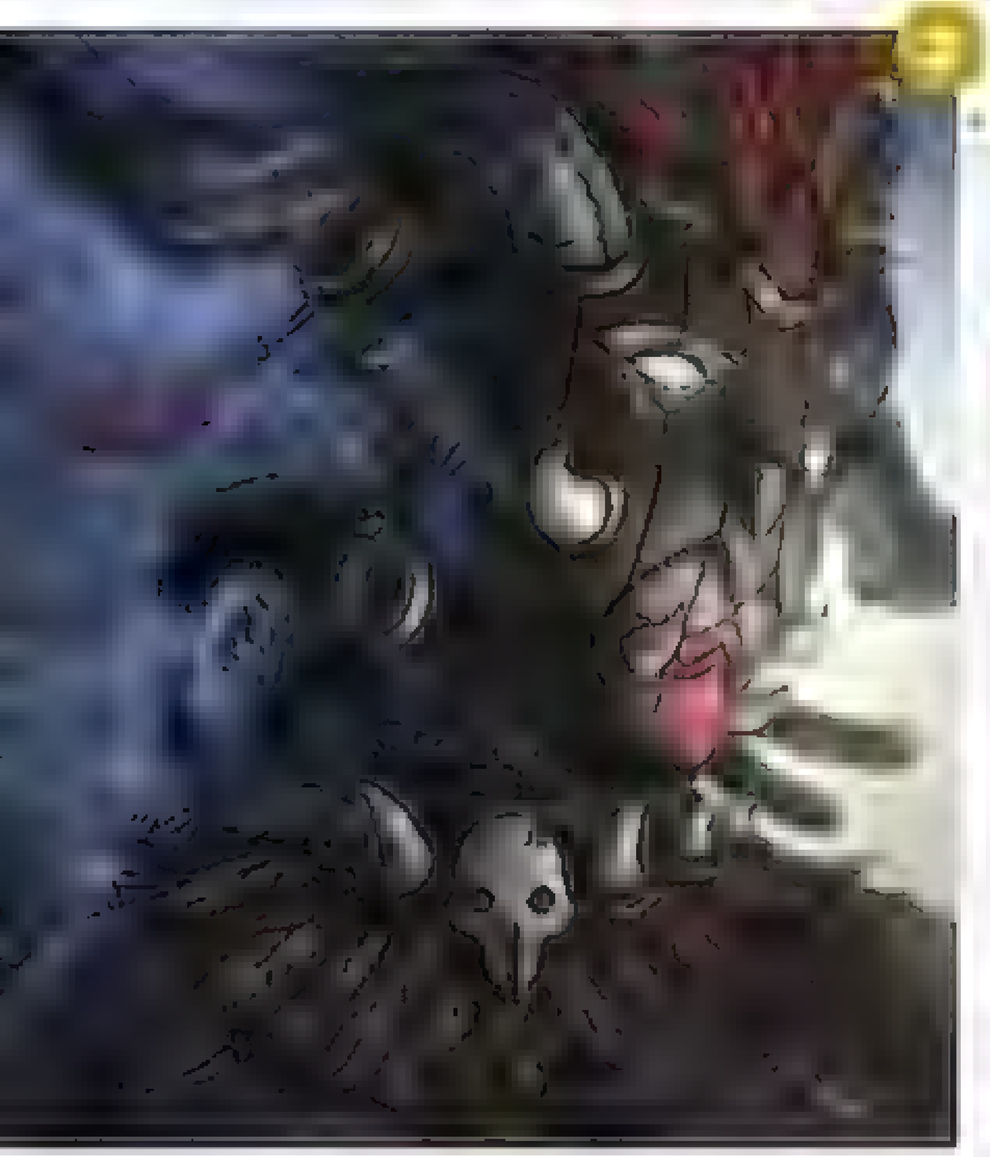


It's not often we find artists who, among aspirations of working for a video game studio or creating card art, include meeting our good Queen in the same list. Step forward Irina, an enigmatic Russian artist with huge goals in sight. "Right now, my three major dreams are to be lead artist in a studio like Bethesda, to create art for Magic: The Gathering and to meet Queen Elizabeth II!"

Driven by her passion for art and video games, Irina is determined to devote every moment possible to achieving her goal working in the games industry. "In Russia, getting into game development is harder than you may think, so I've been spending a lot of time trying to grow as an artist, using the help of my friends, books and tutorials to become a better artist."

LILITH AND CAINE "That one is based on the World of Darkness RPG universe. Here, I chose to depict two characters from one of the game's mysterious myths, which have never been illustrated officially."

WITCHDOCTOR "This is my tribute to the Witchdoctor class in Diablo 3 - I loved that mysterious guy! I designed the mask we see here, and wanted to show his connection to spirits."



Reader Posé

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Sam Westall

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Photoshop



After achieving a first class honours degree at the Norwich University College of the Arts, Sam is looking to establish himself as a concept artist in the video game and film industries. Sam clearly has an eye for designing intriguing creatures, but the humble artist tells us that ImagineFX has helped him along his way.

"ImagineFX is an incredible source of inspiration, and has set the bar for the quality of work in the industry. It's helped me become a better designer, although I still have a long way to go." We're not taking the credit for this one, Sam – natural talent always finds a way to shine through.



ALIEN HEAD DESIGN 01 "I wanted to create an exoskeleton creature that was a cross between a crab, a cockroach and a dinosaur. Taking things from real life and mixing them together is a great technique if you want to create original designs. This was a turning point for me, which I'm proud of."

COBRA ALIEN "This was originally going to be an alien, but it looked a bit dull. So I decided to make it more reptilian, and I feel that this outcome was better. I learnt an important lesson: if a design isn't working, don't just throw it away. Turn it into something else."

COLD IN HERE? "Following on from my other alien head designs, this piece was to feel more like a Creature From The Black Lagoon kind of monster. I've had a lot of fun creating these alien designs – next stop will be environments for these creatures to inhabit..."

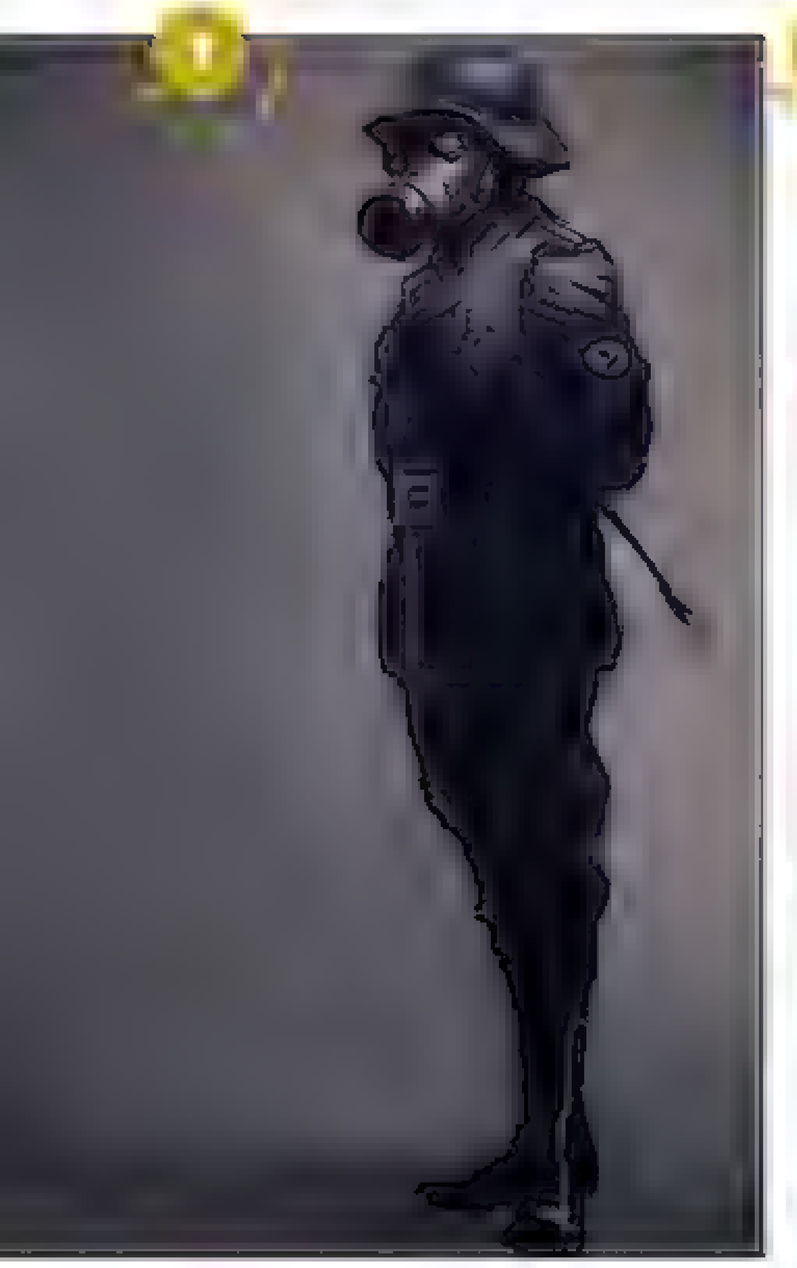




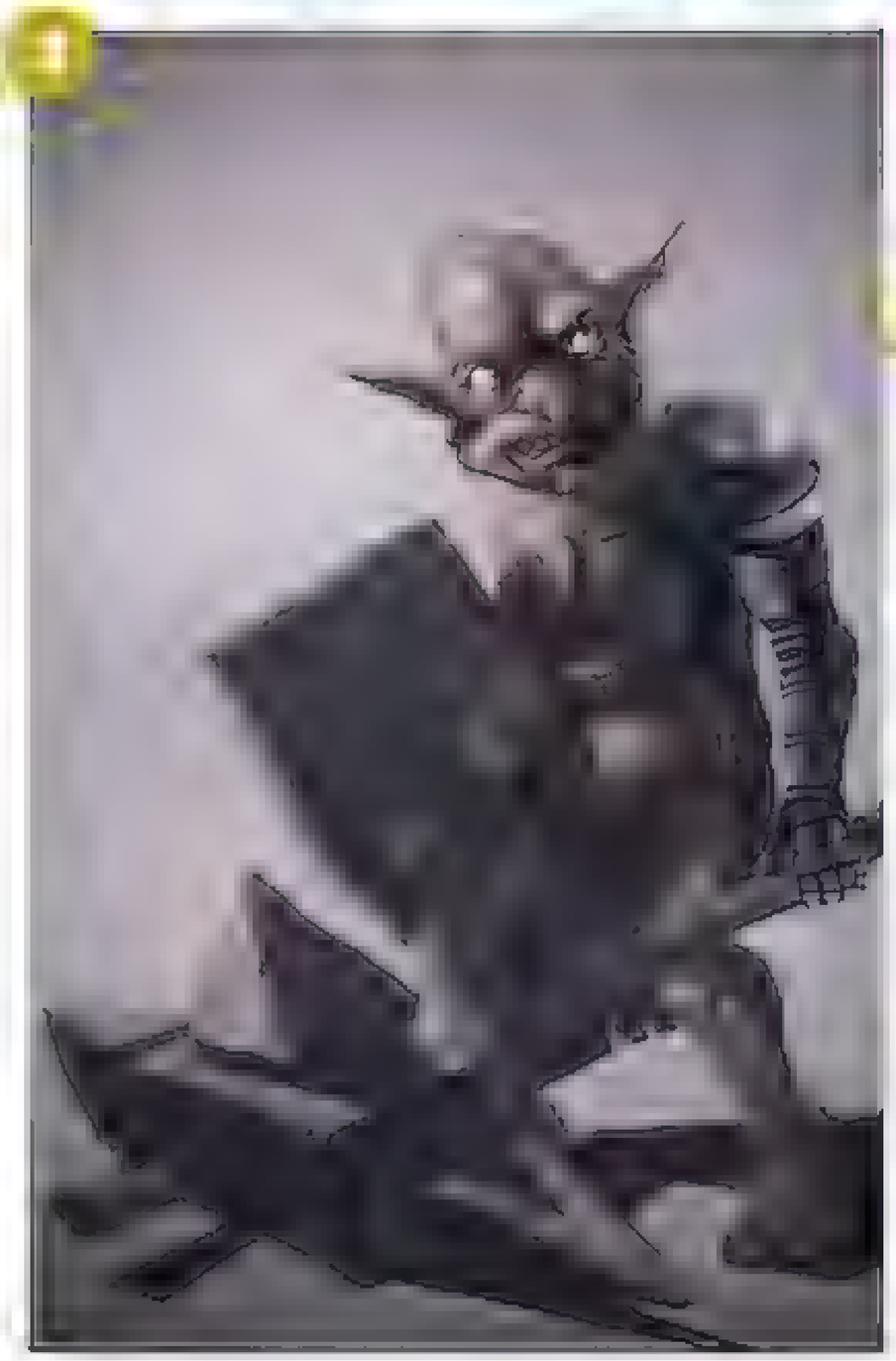


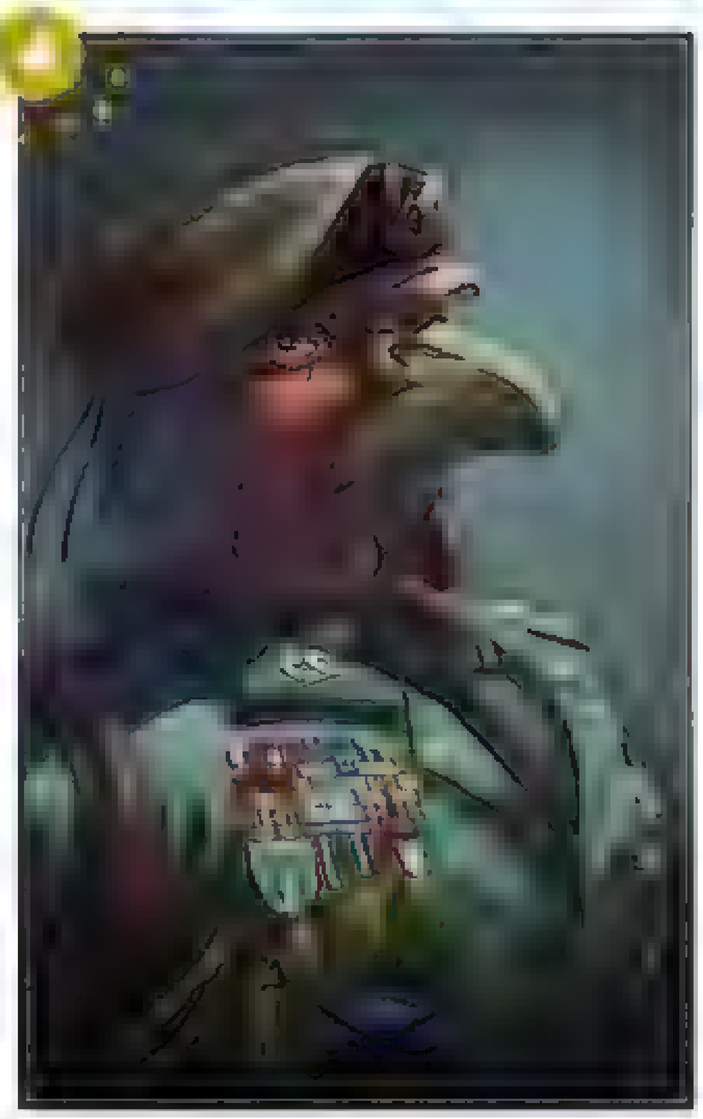
"You can tell that a lot of careful consideration has gone into these unique creature designs, with each alien having its own sense of personality and history. Sam's designs would sit happily in an epic sci-fi video game."

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imagine-fx.com









Helio Frazão
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Photoshop



Helio spent much of his childhood practising his drawing skills with Disney characters and Manga art as a child. "Then in 2002 I discovered digital art, and I've been in love with it ever since."

Having recently made his debut as a concept artist at Odd School, a Portuguese creative studio-turned-school, Helio is now able to share his passion for digital art with fellow aspiring digital artists. "Eventually, I'd love to get involved in the gaming industry, and help shape amazing stories and gorgeous games."

GAS MASK "I like watching the National Geographic channel, and recently there was a whole week dedicated to WWII. I was influenced by the style of certain aspects and sketched out this soldier in a couple of hours. I wanted to juxtapose the fancy outfit with the horrible gas mask."

THE SAMURAI "I love loose sketches, lively and energetic brush strokes and brush economy. I think this piece has got a Feng Zhu feel to it."

THE GOBLIN "This started out as a quick head sketch between breaks at work that got out of control. I just kept going, and stretched the canvas until the character was fleshed out."

MAJOR BIRDIE I have a background in the military, and this piece is poking fun at it. I enjoyed playing around with textures and the lightning."

Reader FXPosé

Mathias Zamecki

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



2009 was a defining year for Mathias, who at that time was in his final year of high school, faced with the decision of what to do next. "I tried to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. I always used to draw on the back of my school notebooks," he recalls, providing further evidence that art was his natural calling.

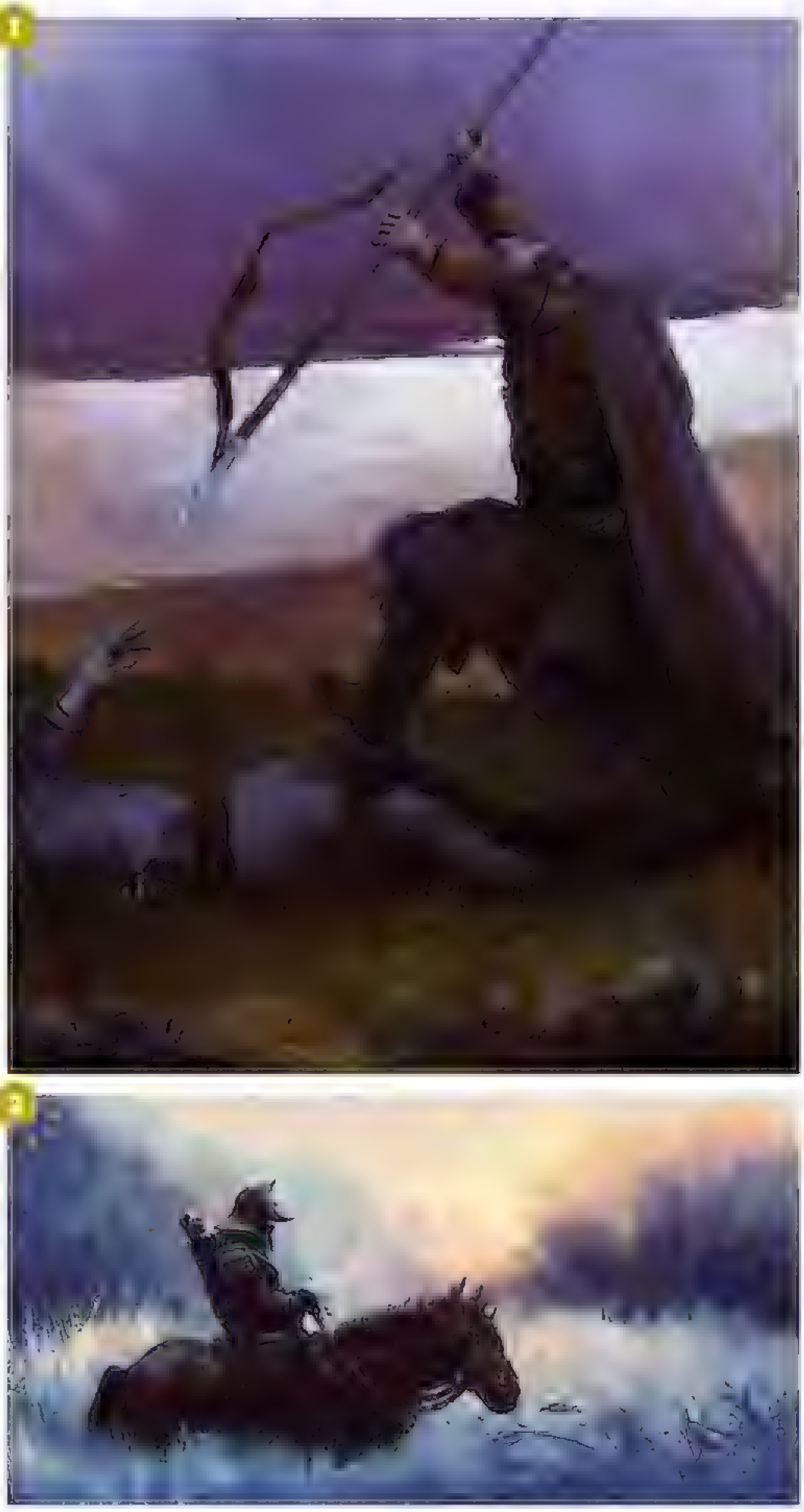
Mathias went on to complete a 3D animation and FX course, and soon found himself working in the games industry. "I'm now a senior concept artist/character modeller at a games studio, although I'm open for freelance on the side."

IMAGINEFX SAYS



"Mathias has given his digital paintings a traditional feel, which is no mean feat when you consider that he's only been working digitally for three years. His early career success is clearly well deserved."

Chris Hopper, Operations Editor



NAMELESS ASSASSINATION "I've always been interested in the Crusaders and medieval Europe. A lot of people died in those times without reason. With this piece, I tried to develop my compositional skills in order to push myself."

BLACK RAIDER "A while ago I watched a documentary about Frank Frazetta, which inspired me to make my own tribute to his Death Dealer series. I decided to create a dark fantasy knight, experimenting with lighting and colour effects."

CHILDHOOD DREAM "When I was a kid, I always wanted a big robot or a spaceship that could take me away from my boring front yard. This gave me the idea of a homeless boy who finds an old rusty robot in a back of scrap heap."



Reader Posé

Elena Ciolacu

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SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Thanks to support from her family from a young age, Romanian artist Elena discovered a natural talent for the arts after her mother encouraged her to draw her surroundings and family portraits. "Drawing became more than child's play around the age of seven, and I've been practising ever since."

As time progressed, Elena moved into the field of digital art during her university studies, and hopes to one day carve out a career in the animation industry, a desire driven by her fondness for Hayao Miyazaki and Makoto Shinkai. "An early and important influence on my work is Ayami Kojima. Although it's not as strong as before, it still continues to shape my art."

IMAGINEFX SAYS



"I really love the loose, textured feel in some of Elena's paintings seen here. I can almost sense her searching for new ideas, form and backstories in her brush strokes, use of colour and subtle lighting."

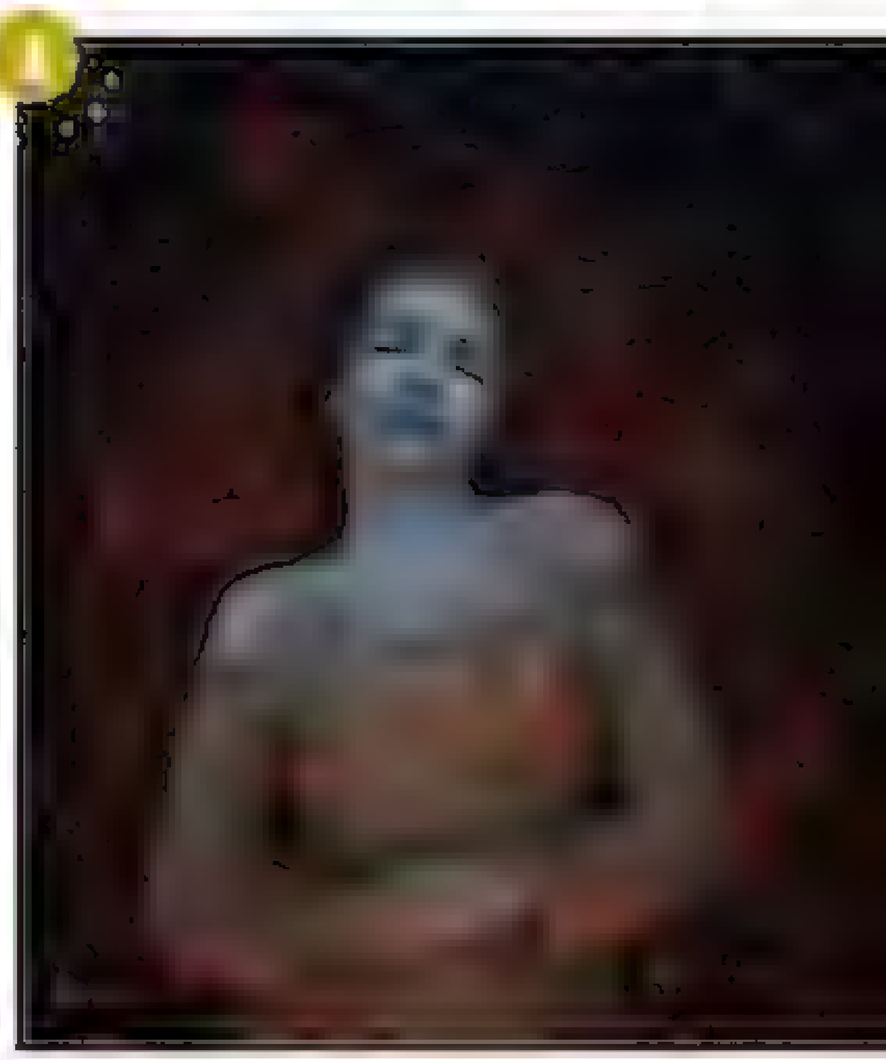
Ian



NEW NEIGHBOURS "This image came to me while I was playing around with brush strokes, which is much the same way we look for shapes in the clouds. I find this method quite helpful in overcoming artist's block."



PERSEPHONE "In my take on the Greek myth of Persephone, she takes a walk through her new home, curious to see what it looks like. Persephone's not scared but cautious, melancholic and attentive, because she's a goddess and so isn't afraid."



THEN HE SET THE BOAT ON FIRE "I like to leave stories untold, so that viewers can use clues to build the stories themselves. Here, by connecting the clues in the title with the image itself, the viewer gets a hint of the story."

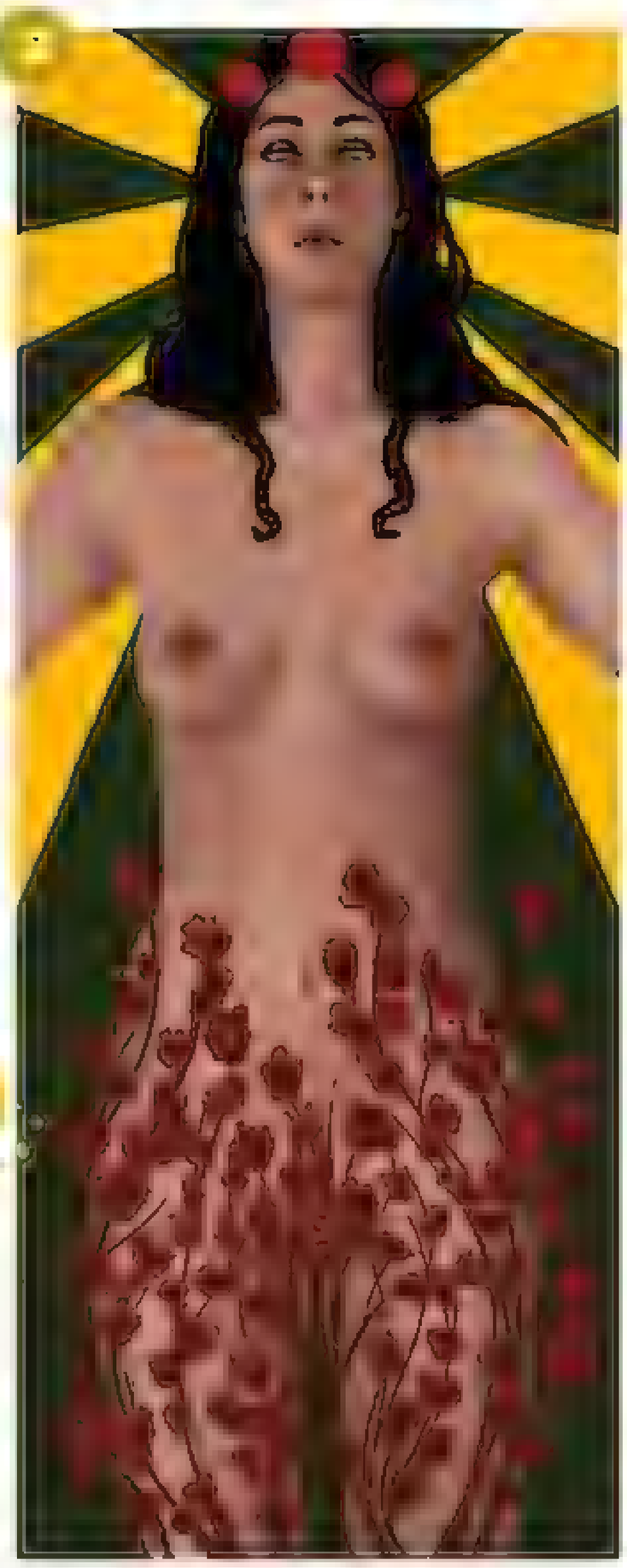
Lale Ann
LOCATION: Switzerland
WEB: www.laleann.daportfolio.com
EMAIL: laleann@ymail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Lale's love for digital art sprung from her initial ambition of becoming a photographer. "When I first began painting digitally, I had no intention of going further in that direction, because I was interested in photography. Then I realised that I wasn't spending my days taking pictures, but painting instead!"

Now studying contemporary arts at university, Lale hopes to branch out into concept art or illustration once her studies are over. "Although I'm a student, I've learnt everything I know about digital art by myself, thanks to the Internet and all the great helpful artists out there. I know I still have a long way to go, but I'm willing to work hard to reach my dreams."





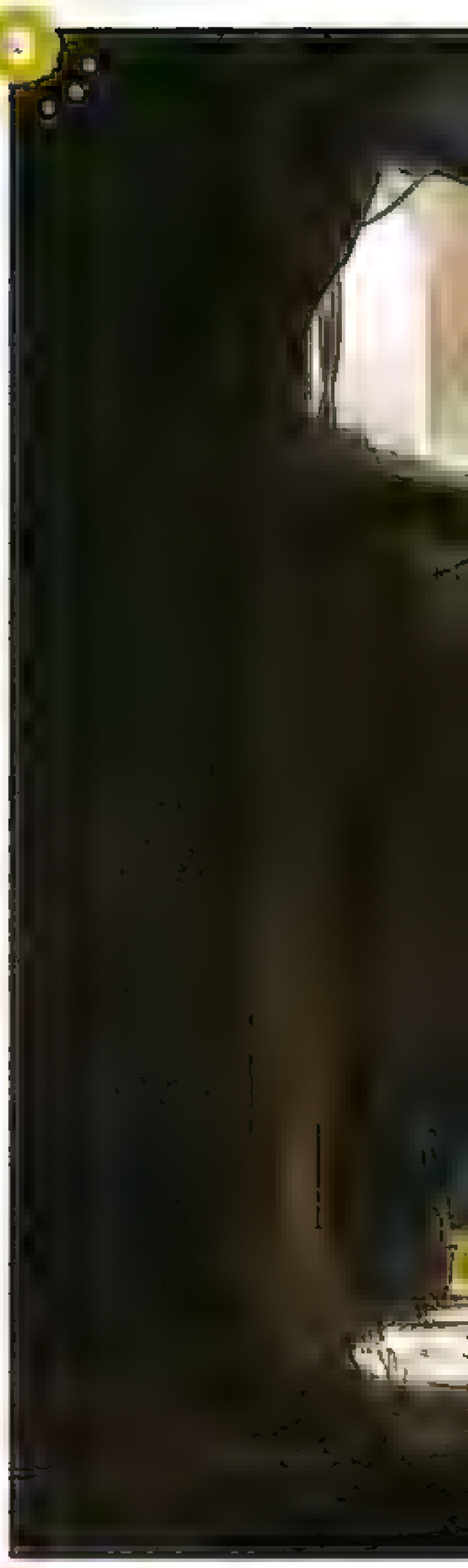


THE TRUTH ABOUT DONALD "This is an interpretation of The Ugly Duckling. I wanted to do something more humorous than what I usually do, as well as tell a story. I had fun with creating the dinosaur's expression."

CARRION "This is based on Charles Baudelaire's poem A Carcass. My main goal was to illustrate the poem in a soft and sensual way. It was a challenge not to get caught by the morbidity and cynicism of the poem and keep focused on the more erotic side of it."

MOTHER "I've always loved painting women and admire artists who are able to depict feminine delicacy and grace. That's what I tried to do with this quick portrait, which ended up as a gift to my mom."



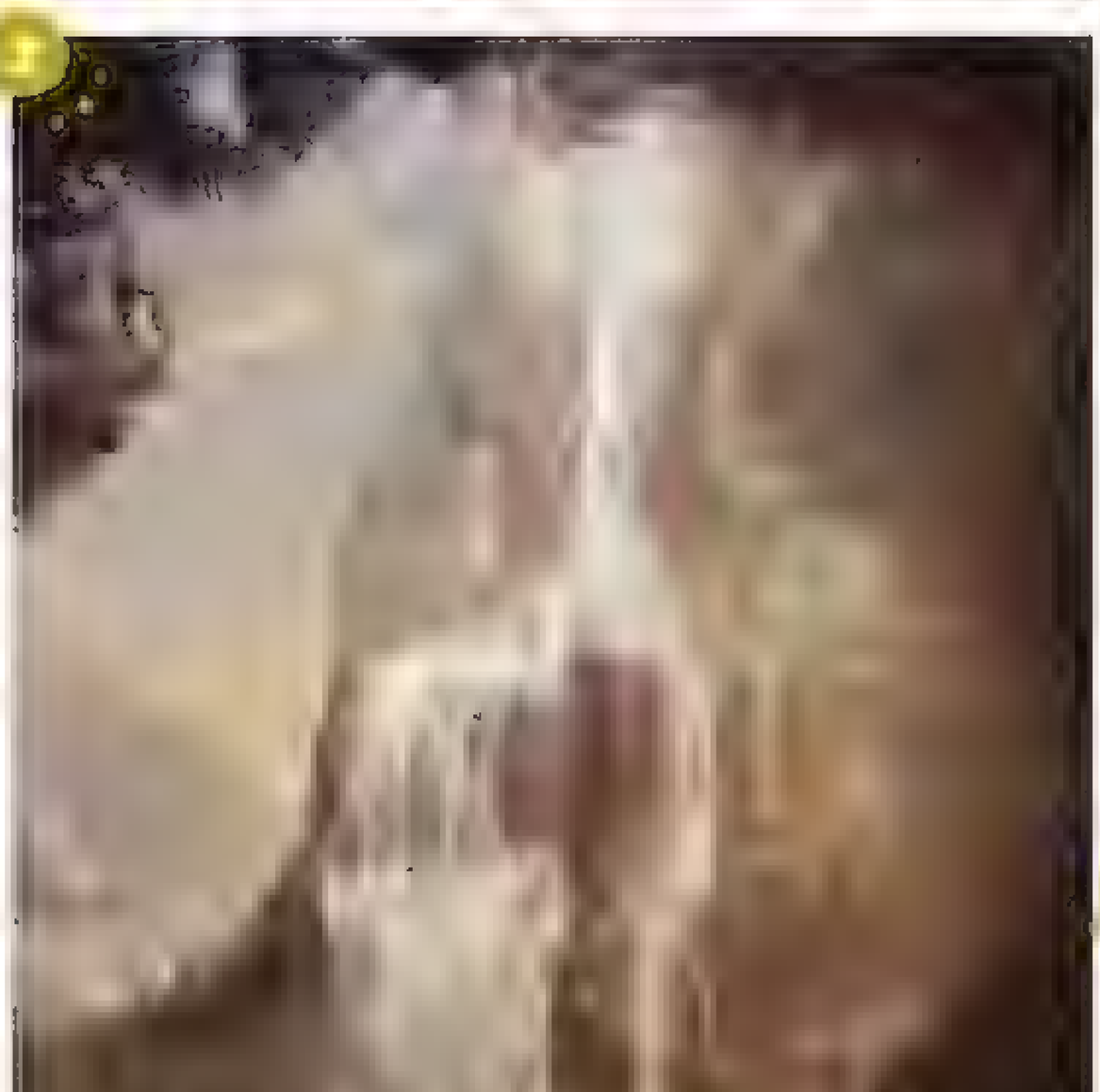


Jordan Grimmer
England
www.jordangrimmer.co.uk
jordangrimmer@hotmail.com
Photoshop, SketchUp



When you consider that Jordan spent much of his youth covering his bedroom walls in character designs and redesigned areas of Mortal Kombat and Final Fantasy, a career in video game concept art was certainly on the cards. "I've always been obsessed with creating new worlds, and after studying games art and design at university last year I knew that my goal in life would be to carve out a career as a concept artist."

Along with working as a freelance artist on the side, Jordan is busy studying for an MA in concept art for games and animation.



OUTSKIRTS "This is part of a graphic novel project that I'm working on with a friend. It was first painted in black and white to create the composition and contrast of the piece. From there I used and moulded different photo textures in conjunction with painting with the normal Round brush to add details."

THE POOL "This is a book cover I recently completed for JR Karlsson's novel Escana. I really wanted to create a traditional 'old English' fantasy feel to the piece."

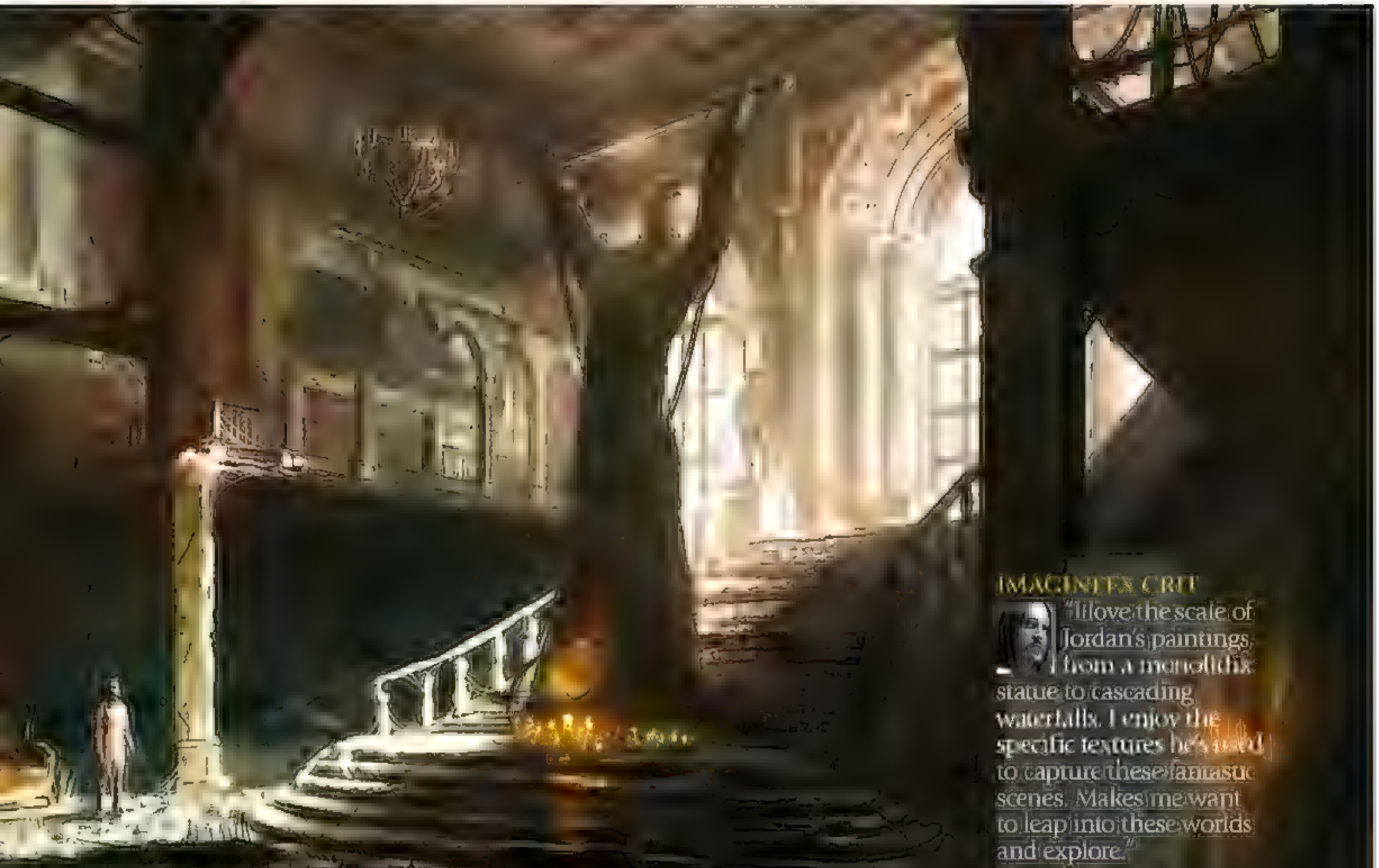
MANSION STAIRS "I wanted to make the lighting a prime factor within the painting by experimenting with a style I had never used before. By using the light in such a way I hoped that it would silhouette the statue, creating an interesting area of contrast."

BRIDGE "Many of my paintings are fuelled by games that have stunning environment designs. From this, I like to create my own rendition of them, changing them to something else using my own style of painting."



FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@magnefx.com

StoreMags.com



IMAGINEFX CRIT

"I love the scale of Jordan's paintings, from a monolithic statue to cascading waterfalls. I enjoy the specific textures he's used to capture these fantastic scenes. Makes me want to leap into these worlds and explore."
Daniel Vincent, Art Editor



Want to see your digital art grace these very pages?

Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically

You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them.
fxpose@imaginefx.com

SEND YOUR ARTWORK TO:
FXPosé
ImagineFX
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, BA1 2BW
UK

StoreMags.com



CROOZ IS GROWING
Japan's CROOZ currently has 400 employees and is looking to expand – will you earn a contract?

CROOZ INTO AN ART CAREER

One of Japan's largest online games companies is looking for new artists, and wants ImagineFX readers to apply!

"Our target is to provide the best social games that lead us to be number one in the world," says Yoshinori Nakasa, director in charge of overseas business at CROOZ. The twist is, it wants ImagineFX readers and artists to be a part of its success.

CROOZ began working on social games in 2010, and has since emerged as one of top five online games producers on Japan's Mobage, the country's biggest mobile social games platform. With 10 million registered users and revenue of $83 million in the last fiscal year, CROOZ is a success.

The biggest game on CROOZ's books is Ragnabreak (known as Deity Wars outside of Japan), a fantasy RPG with 2.5 million players worldwide that puts exquisite art at the core of its design. "What differentiates it from other games is its beautiful character illustrations," says Yoshinori.

A GROWING MARKET
In the past two years Japan's social games market has grown dramatically in value, from $1.2 billion to $3.6 billion.



ARTIST INTERVIEW

INUBIKO

Having designed some of CROOZ's most-loved characters, this illustrator explains what it takes to succeed at this rising social games company

What's so attractive about working at CROOZ? Why should a new artist want to join your team?

Besides all of the wonderful equipment, CROOZ provides extra features making it both comfortable and meaningful to work here. For example, we have workshops once a week where artists share all kinds of information. On the other hand, illustrators working for CROOZ make such wonderful art work. We work on one game as a team and when I see my colleagues' artwork created to such high quality while developing the game, it really inspires me.

What does a new artist have to consider? Could you give potential artists a message or some advice?

In expressing your own fantastic world, it's always important to have fun and try hard at the same time. I believe anyone is able to create these illustrations, depending on the effort the artist makes. I had little experience when I started work here.

What's the most challenging aspect about working on character illustrations?

I can't really decide what's most challenging because there's just so much going on in these illustrations. However, I do set myself a theme when I work on each illustration, such as improving the decoration, composition, texture, colouring or [my] speed. I'm always willing to advance my skills while working on my art.

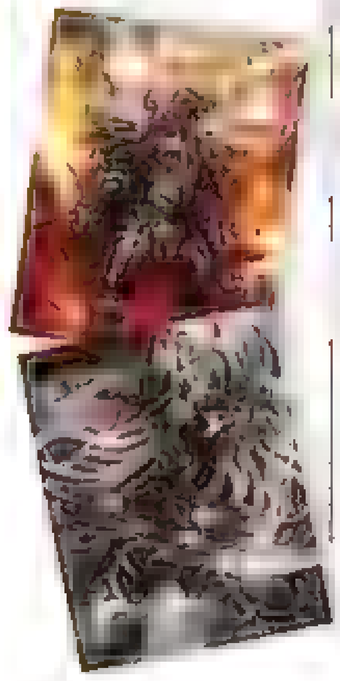


Inubiko is an illustrator at CROOZ and has worked for the company for the past nine months.



SUCCESSFUL FRANCHISE

Ragnabreak, the Japanese version of Deity Wars, has been in the chart's top 20 for more than six months in a row on Mobage, Japan's biggest gaming platform



Three lands – Heaven, Hell and Earth – have collided due to the 'dimension ascension' and by exploring the worlds and finding new character cards the player can use new powers and strive to save the day.

"Each of these characters has a 'rarity' level depending on how strong it is, but we pursue the best-quality illustration even for the normal-rarity cards," says Yuta, game director in charge of Deity Wars. "We believe this is really important, to let people totally freak out over our games."

GET YOUR DREAM JOB

It's Deity Wars that CROOZ needs your help with, the company plans to expand the game outside of Japan and is actively searching for new artists from around the world to help expand its universe of colourful characters. CROOZ is searching for new art styles and techniques to expand its art team, and wants you to apply.

The artwork is crucial to Deity Wars. It will be used in various scenes of the game, such as rewards for winning battles, quests or prizes. "Since many players are playing this game to acquire those beautiful illustrations," says Daisuke, art director in charge of illustrations used in Deity Wars. "We feel the usage of the illustrations is very important to make the game successful."

We pursue the best-quality illustration even for the normal-rarity cards



LEARN TO USE NEW POWERS

The cards players discover in Deity Wars enable them to access new character abilities

BEAUTIFUL ART

The character art is a reward for players who defeat monsters, creatures and boss characters in the game, so it must be beautifully designed and highly rendered.



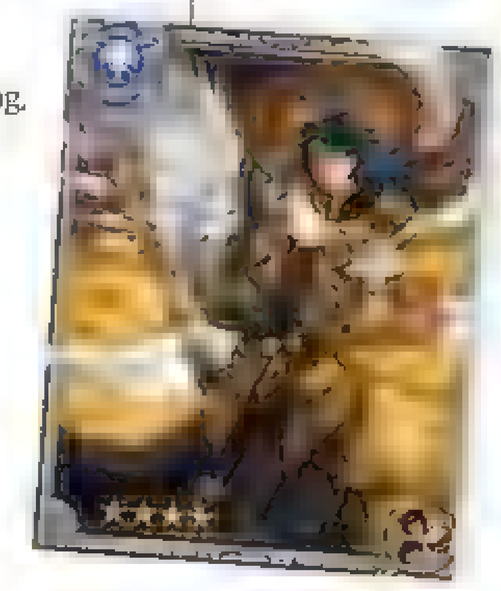
As an illustrator for CROOZ you'll fit into a company who put 'Cool 'n' Fun' (it's the studio's motto) ahead of stress and hardship. "The most important thing is originality," adds Daisuke, explaining "Deity Wars is a fantasy RPG game and the reason why this game has been a global hit is because of its overwhelming quality and creativity of the illustrations

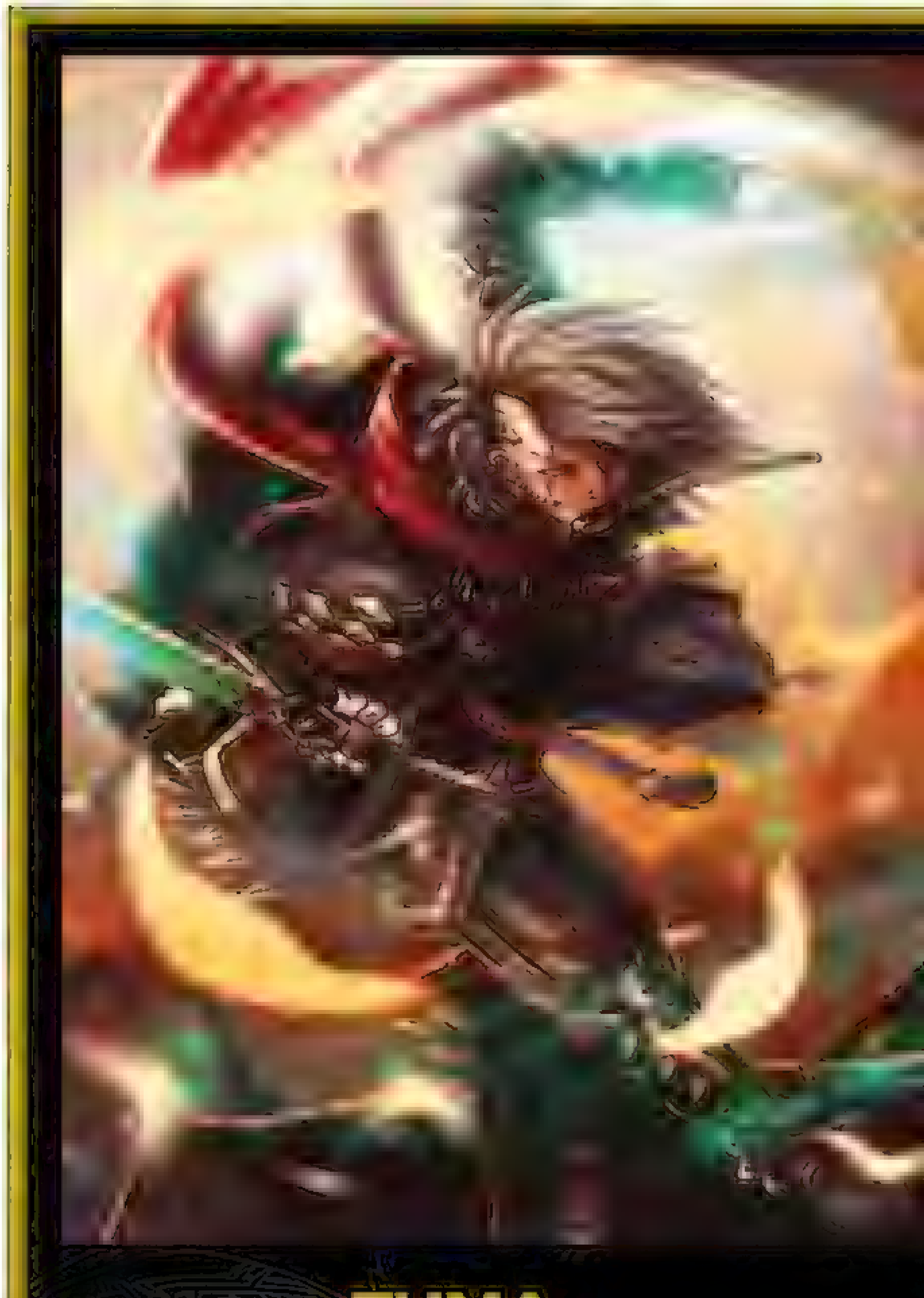
"It's also very important to make the players feel they want the characters. Therefore, we're looking for fantastical, appealing, gorgeous illustrations which would inspire the vision of the game."

If you land a contract, you'll be expected to spend between a week and a month on each illustration, depending on the complexity and intended rarity of the card art. ➳

CHARACTER CARD ART

The art is integral to Deity Wars, so CROOZ is looking for artists with new styles and techniques to fit into its portfolio





FUMA KOTAROU

CROOZ artist Moon selects one of his most cherished portfolio pieces



"I was especially careful about putting my originality into this character," says Moon, "because there are dozens of games using beautiful fantasy art and tons of illustrations with handsome men. It's very hard to stand out among them or to make the image remain in the player's heads."

In order to differentiate his character from the many similarly themed heroes in the fantasy genre, Moon wanted his creation to be unique in every way. Moon always tries to put unusual ideas into his characters' costume designs, hair and even their accessories.

"On Fuma Kotarou, I played around by putting earrings on a ninja character and shaving its head," says Moon. "This made it look very different from characters you usually see."

CREATING SURTR

New CROOZ card art illustrator Inubiko picks his favourite portfolio piece

Having nine months' experience behind him at CROOZ studios on projects that [illegible] for Japan, Inubiko was tasked with creating the character painting for Deity Wars.

"Surtr was only supposed to be one of the [illegible] Inubiko. "However, the game director and other illustrators looked at my piece and asked if I could make it an official character.

"I was especially careful in making the character look dynamic and cool. By [illegible]

to create the illusion of size, making the character look gigantic. I took away all the extra details, making the art look complicating in order to emphasise the character's stylish appearance.

Inubiko is clear on how his character should look. The artist didn't want to create a terrifying monster but a character who could connect with the viewer, through its eyes and some background details.

"Looking back at this illustration now, I do feel that there are parts which could be pointed out as immature," says Inubiko. "But I still love this piece and it's something I will treasure in my soul forever."





A MAJOR SUCCESS
The social game Deity Wars has been a huge hit for CROOZ, with over 2.5 million registered players around the world.

Watching characters that you thought up and proposed entwining with the game concept give you a great boost

CROOZ is looking for artists who not only have a strong style and technique, but who can also adapt their art to fit a global gaming market.

"It's very hard to create illustrations that are acceptable in all countries because the tastes of popular artwork differ by country," confirms Daisuke. "This means that it will be very important for artists to have the ability to adopt and create illustrations matching the styles for each country. However, artists must have their own style and skills to be able to do this."

Artist Moon enjoys the work ethic at CROOZ. "Everyone works together to create the best art possible, says Moon. "Yuta, the game's director, respects artists and enables his team to bounce ideas of one another. The character Tenkai the High Priest was born in this way. I pointed out that there weren't any old men in Deity Wars, and by building up precise plots, we could make it a very interesting character."

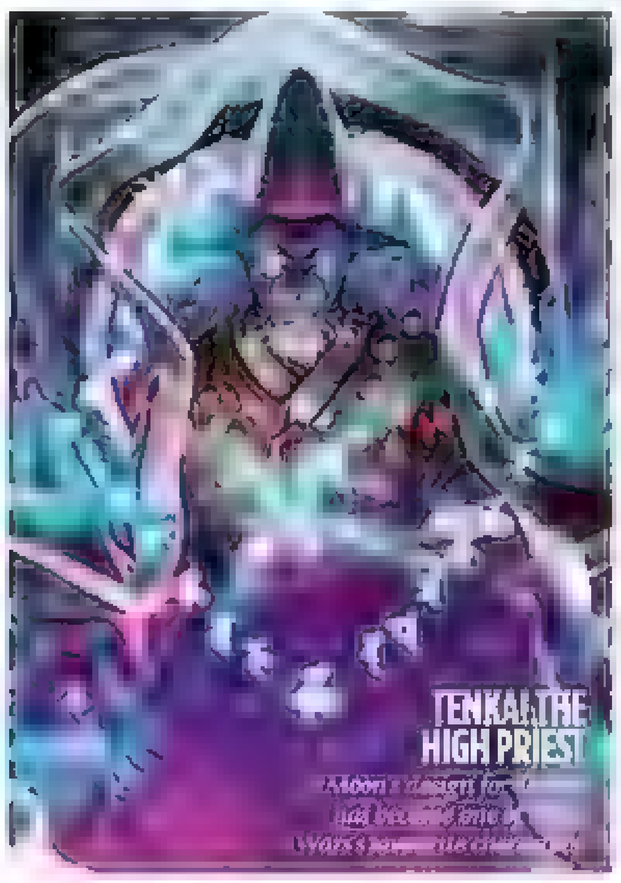


The game's planners soon gave Moon ideas for the new character and the plot was decided. Both teams worked to put flesh on the character's bones and he became the very popular archbishop character whose soul is ruled by evil.

"Watching characters that you thought up and proposed entwining with the game concept give you a great boost and an urge to create [more] game characters," reflects Moon on his achievements.

Whether you're a seasoned pro, a student or hobbyist looking for that first break, send your portfolio to CROOZ and maybe you'll be part of their family of illustrators who are committed to be the best in the world.

Apply now by sending your work and details to: illustrator_apply@crooz.co.jp



CROOZ IN YOUR ART CAREER

HERE'S HOW TO APPLY

CROOZ is looking for new artists to develop Deity Wars around the world. Earn yourself a chance to have your art used globally with one of the biggest social game developers in Japan!

1. Prepare a portfolio with three to five of your strongest pieces in jpeg format or a web link to your gallery.
2. Mail your portfolio image or web link to CROOZ at **illustrator_apply@crooz.co.jp** with your pen name and company name (if you belong to any).
3. The company will reply to you, hopefully giving you the opportunity to become a member of this most talented illustration team.
4. Visit our website at **http://beta.imaginefx.com** for regular news from CROOZ, advice from its artists and portfolio tips. And, of course, more art to study!
5. Also visit CROOZ's gallery at **www.crooz.co.jp/en/** to see more beautiful fantasy illustrations.

INTRICATE ART
CROOZ artists will spend up to four weeks designing and painting characters for the game Deity Wars.





The art of goal keeping

Bold ambition From skill to confidence, it's never too late to set yourself creative targets – just aim for realistic ones!

The word 'plan' can be a fickle thing when it wants to be. It's not always possible to achieve personal objectives, but it's the trying that counts.

So why do we do it? According to comic book legend William Stout, goals are the beginning of one's motivation process, and it's essential to differentiate between goals and fantasies or desires.





Reflection is a vital part of every artist's creative journey. Most of my goals aren't time dependant, and it's important to set realistic targets, illustrator Ralph Horsley explains. Setting shorter time scaled achievable goals creates a series of confidence boosting steps rather than something that might be a long term and difficult as to be a negative influence.

Building on good and bad times helps you take what you can in order to grow. "As a comic book artist I set a goal of working with my five biggest comic book heroes: Harvey Kurtzman, Will Eisner, Jack Kirby, Jean Moebius Giraud and Alex Toth. William recalls. "I got to collaborate with a but Alex Toth.

But what if it doesn't work out, how you hoped? If I miss a goal, I just move onto the next one without looking back for very long. William says. "There's not time for regrets. Giving into negativity can be all too



SOLO SPACE OPERATICS

Ubisoft concept artist Martin Deschambault is busy working on Project 77, including sprawling industrial imagery that we rather like the look of.

Page 29



ARTISTIC JOURNEY

Currently staying at his mam's in Switzerland, Francesco Lorenzetti's art studio is minimalist and flexible – ever ready to be packed up for his next move.

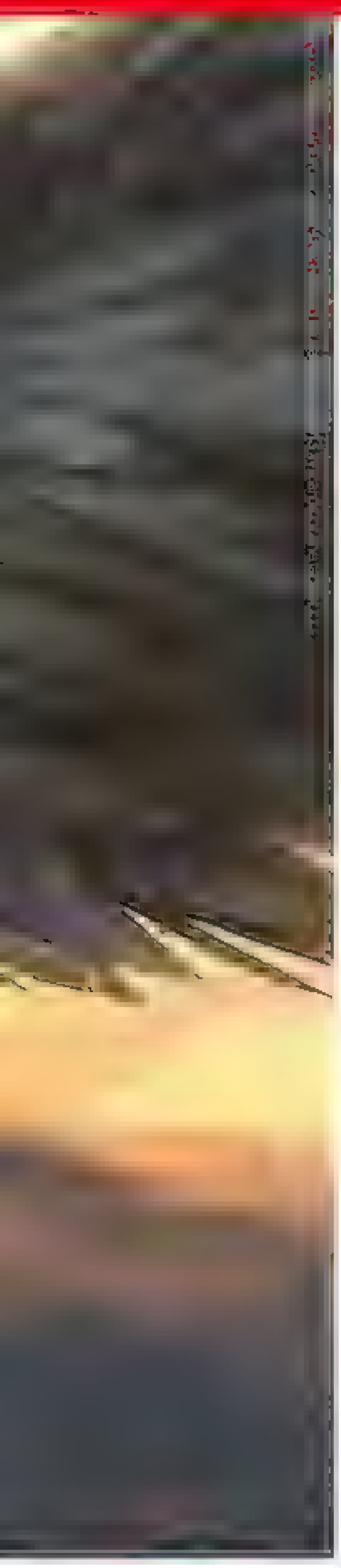
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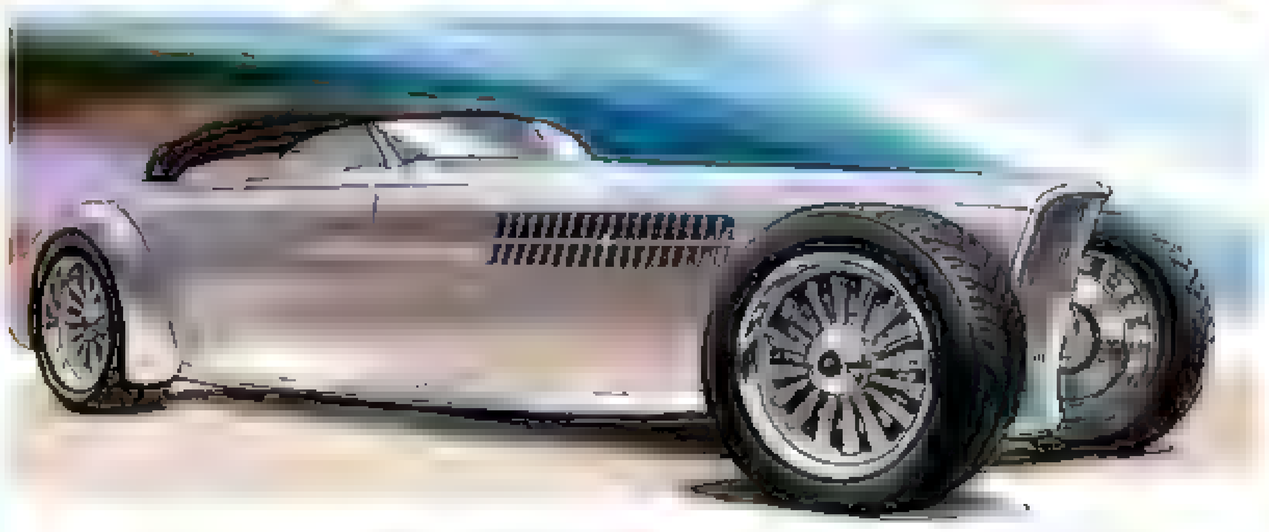
NAUGHTY BUT NICE

Toshio Saeki erotic fantasy art may not be to everyone's tastes, but it sure provides a talking point. UK readers can check out his exhibition in March.

Page 33







Bruce hung out in New York aspiring to paint book covers, but now designs cars such as this one – the Aeroliner car concept, that went into production.



> If I miss a goal, I move onto the next one without looking back

easy but training yourself to spot the good out of the bad can make all the difference.

Each failure is linked to a lesson to learn and this makes you better,



says Wizards of the Coast artist Svetlin Velinov. "It's not possible to achieve all your goals. Going down that road will turn you into something you don't want to be, so failure is useful because it

Married couple and collaborative painters Boris and Julie talk goals

Why is it important to set goals?
Boris: Goals give a sense of direction, but it's more important to set smaller goals for yourself than big long-term ones.
Julie: It's only important to set goals if you have a desire for something to happen in your future. If you have such a desire, setting small, achievable goals are the footsteps that will take you there. Accomplishing goals is fun, gives confidence and makes you feel more passion for your dream.

What goals did you set yourself and have you achieved them all?
Boris: To mention them all would take a while! I believe I've achieved more than I've missed, but I don't keep track.
Julie: I've achieved the ones that have led me to the place I'm at, which makes me very happy.

What do you do when you miss your goals?
Boris: I try to figure out why. Then I move on to the next.
Julie: Revaluate the situation and hopefully learn something important from it.

Will you ever achieve everything you want in your art?
Boris: I sure hope not.
Julie: No way. Art is too big and too infinite in its possibilities.

What are your current goals?
Boris: To do more personal paintings, just because I want to.
Julie: I feel I'm at a point where I can start trying to find out who I am through my art. I'm trying some more experimental, personal paintings in the fantasy art vein. At the same time, I'm creating a new body of work, painting animals. I'd like to make myself known in the fine art world with these paintings.



Peruvian-born Boris and bodybuilder Julie are very well established fantasy artists.

http://mallepa.tripod.com
www.juliebell.com

Continued from previous page...



Bruce would jump at the chance to explore sci-fi art further

makes you set new goals to chase, not your screed

There's still plenty to be found with an alternative route as automotive concept artist and graphic designer Bruce Jaser found out. As a youngster Bruce envisioned becoming a sci-fi painter and following in the footsteps of his heroes. After graduation he realised that his fascination with classic cars could land him regular freelance work after spotting a shortage of vehicle artists. Because there weren't a lot of people specialising in automotive illustration and graphic design years ago, always had plenty of work day to day and never had a specific plan.

Although not what he initially planned, Bruce's career has since flourished and his work has received praise from several of his favourite automotive artists and has been exhibited alongside them at various shows. I'm also proud of the reputation I have with my clients," he says, "which is certainly something to be cheerful about." Just goes to show that seeking new goals and positive thinking can make all the difference.

So no matter how big or small that goal may be, it's the doing that really counts. We think that Les Barany, agent to the legendary HR Giger, says it best: "Stop dreaming and start doing." And if that plan does veer off track, set new goals and enjoy where it takes you.

Life is Humiliation

by Matt Boyce



Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

"Cows are renowned for methane production, so why not strap cows to the rocket?"

Now that's the type of – ahem – moo sky thinking we approve of. More from Nick Harris on page 80

Enjoy the Vue

Natural look Indulge in a spot of digital gardening with the latest additions to Vue 11

Recreating nature realistically is one of digital art's toughest challenges, which is why any assistance is greatly appreciated. E-on Software has recently released a new upgrade for the acclaimed natural environment rendering program Vue 11, and you can try it out for free.

Users of the standalone Vue 11 Infinite and the plug-in variant xStream can now enjoy the benefits of the new Personal Learning Edition (PLE), which enables users to create and save complete projects, export files to other programs and render both stills and animations without being restricted by size and length limits.

For 3D artists looking to a detailed rendering solution, the new Vue 11 PLE is fully compatible with industry 3D tools including 3ds Max, Maya and Cinema 4D, making it possible for artists to combine multiple programs with ease.

In addition, you can download a free trial version for 3D artists, which enables users to try out the Esprit Studio and Complete editions. Head over to **www.e-onsoftware.com** for more details and see our review on page 100.



The Vue PLE edition includes many upgrades for higher quality rendering



E-on's software program now offers greater levels of artistic control, which is a real boon for close-up artistic work such as this

Each piece started out as a thumbnail, evolving with light, mood and shape until a concept was fully realised.

The liberty of creation

Custom universe Already two years in the making, Martin Deschambault's Project 77 is a sight to behold



Project 77 is a lavish upcoming space-opera by Ubisoft concept artist Martin Deschambault. If these images are anything to go by, it's going to be one to watch.

This is the kind of project I've always wanted to work on – creating a universe where I had to design environments, vehicles, characters and creatures," says Martin. "While the final format is not yet set, Martin's ongoing goal is to flesh out the visual concepts of the universe and its inhabitants by working to establish an overall visual style. "We started to think about the story as well, like the liberty of creation and switching between the different parts of this universe's fun and inspiring."

The sprawling, industrial look of Project 77 was inspired by Martin's childhood love of classic sci-fi, along with his experience working as a designer in the video game industry. "I enjoy working with strong geometrical shapes. I prefer it when it's graphic with interesting silhouettes."

Visit **www.dechambo.com** for more



Having a hectic role as a games concept artist makes personal projects the perfect creative outlet

The creative process is of great importance to Martin, which could be explored further in a dedicated art book

+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART...



Xenija88

www.xenija88.deviantart.com

Xenija is a professional tattoo artist, and that's exactly what makes her gallery so interesting. Her portfolio is filled with intricate fantasy designs, which is all the more impressive once you see how her designs are replicated on real skin. It's enough to get you booking a tattoo appointment.



AlectorFencer

www.blt.ly/ifx-afencer

Here's a portfolio firmly rooted in fantasy, but with a particular leaning to the anthropomorphic side. Much of AlectorFencer's work is focused on animals and mythical creatures, with plenty of other fantastic pieces along the way, including some spellbindingly terrifying dragons to boot.



DAV-19

www.dav-19.deviantart.com

While manga has evolved over the past few years, it's still great to see artists sticking to its roots. DAV-19's gallery is full of cute little pieces that bring back memories of classic shoujo manga from the 1990s. It's enough to dampen the eyes of even the meanest nightclub bouncer.

This is a portrait of the great master Giovanni Segantini

This is the laptop where I watch films and documentaries while working



My iPad is very useful for travelling.

I use a Wacom Intuos3 as a painting device. I like it because it's eminently portable

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Francesco Lorenzetti

On alert With being an artist always on the go, Francesco's minimalist studio is perfectly designed to be taken anywhere



This is my main studio. It's an attic room in my mother's house, a farmhouse located in a tranquil green valley in Switzerland – surrounded by nature. This is where I grew up, and after years around the globe, I've returned for a short period.

The most important thing in my office is that it must be easily disassembled and reassembled as I'm always ready to live and work abroad. I try not to surround myself with useless gadgets and toys, as I need to be able to dismantle my office in one hour and carry it in a big cardboard box easily.

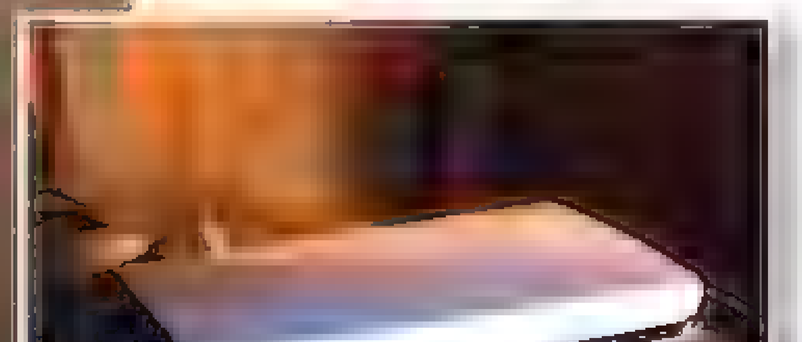
I like to work in small, dark places that give an intimate and warm feeling without any distractions. One thing that determines my work schedules is flexibility. For example if I work for a company in the US I like being

I don't usually take any furniture with me on the move because it's easier to buy something locally.



This is my first WED clay sculpture

I don't take books with me when traveling, so I have folders full of reference material on my PC. Plus there's the internet of course.



This is my library, with many concept art books, illustration books and comics, though it tends to remain at my mother's farmhouse.



able to work in the late afternoon so that I am in sync with my client's time zone. This means I'm available for feedback on my work.

When I work at home I tend to not drink caffeine. I like to catch up on sleep during my non-work nighttime in order to stay relaxed and focused during my work hours. While working I like to play films and documentaries in the background or listen to music and audiobooks. I keep a second laptop on the left side of my main screen for this purpose alone. My main PC is a tower assembled by a friend optimised to work smoothly on graphics software. It's also great for games.

The essentials of my studio are my PC, Wacom tablet, headsets and webcams for online conferences, along with universal power supplies and external hard drives.

Francesco is a concept artist at Atomhawk Design, with expertise in both traditional and digital fields. You can find out more at www.francescolorenzetti.blogspot.com.

PLANET OF THE ARTS

HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF THE EVENTS AND ART BLOGS THAT HAVE GOT US IN A STIR THIS MONTH. IF YOU'VE GOT A STORY OR EVENT THAT SHOULD BE FEATURED HERE, SEND US THE DETAILS: **PLANET@IMAGINEFX.COM** CHEERS!

Nicola Henderson, Staff Writer

1 GPU TECH CONFERENCE

Conference | US

The GPU Technology Conference returns to California on 18-21 March and is a unique chance to get an insight into cutting-edge media technology from leading figures.

www.gputechconf.com

2 JOSE VEGA

Concept Artist | Puerto Rico

Jose's environmental concept designs have been causing quite a stir recently and no wonder. Head to his blog to see epic landscapes and intriguing character designs.

www.josevega.carbonmade.com

3 BAD MACHINERY

Web Comic | England

John Allison's Bad Machinery won Best Comic at the 2012 British Comic Awards, thanks to its simple yet expressive art and clever wit. A must for fans of web comics.

www.badmachinery.com

4 TOSHIO SAEKI

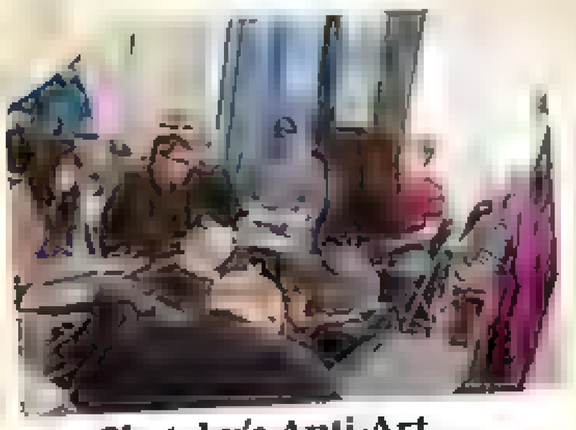
Exhibition | England

Not for the easily embarrassed! The first UK public display of Japanese erotic artist Toshio Saeki takes place between 8 and 9 March at London's Print House Gallery.

www.bootstrapcompany.co.uk

SKETCHY JAM

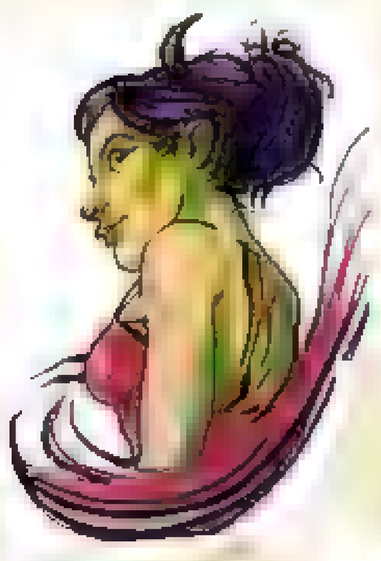
Dr Sketchy's Anaheim brings booze, tunes and hot models together, all in the name of art



Dr Sketchy's Anti-Art School: Anaheim Branch



One of two Maleficent-inspired pieces. This is a watercolour by Javier Beltran



Monica Munster created this marker piece based on a model posing as Maleficent





Another marker piece by Monica, during a Princess Jasmine-themed session

This is Jennifer's sketch of a model who posed as Daenerys Targaryen

TINCEK MARINCEK

Illustrators, Slovenia

5 Avsa Valentina and Marina Pomenar make a formidable duo. Their anime-inspired artwork is a mixture of fan art and original pieces, and is not to be missed.

www.bit.ly/marincek

KAI

Illustrator, Japan

6 Because he also works as a visual kei model and musician, it's no wonder Kai's art is theatrical, stylish and brooding. And his art is created using pen and ink.

www.khaoskai.com

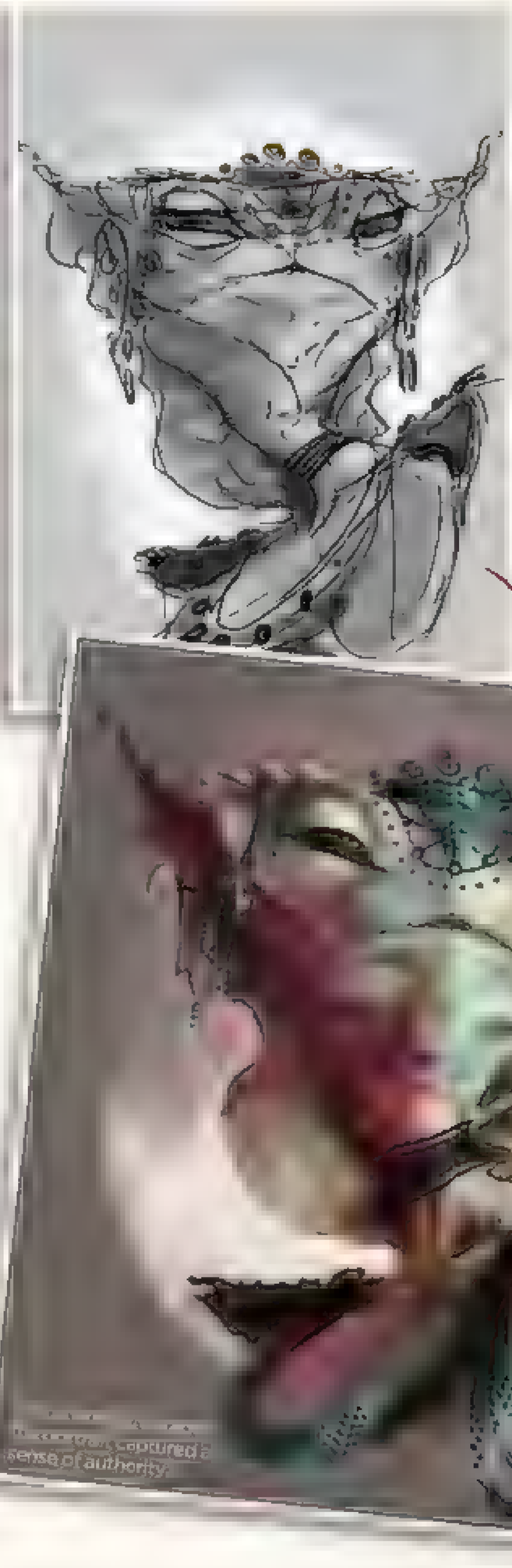
FANTASY SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX Forum

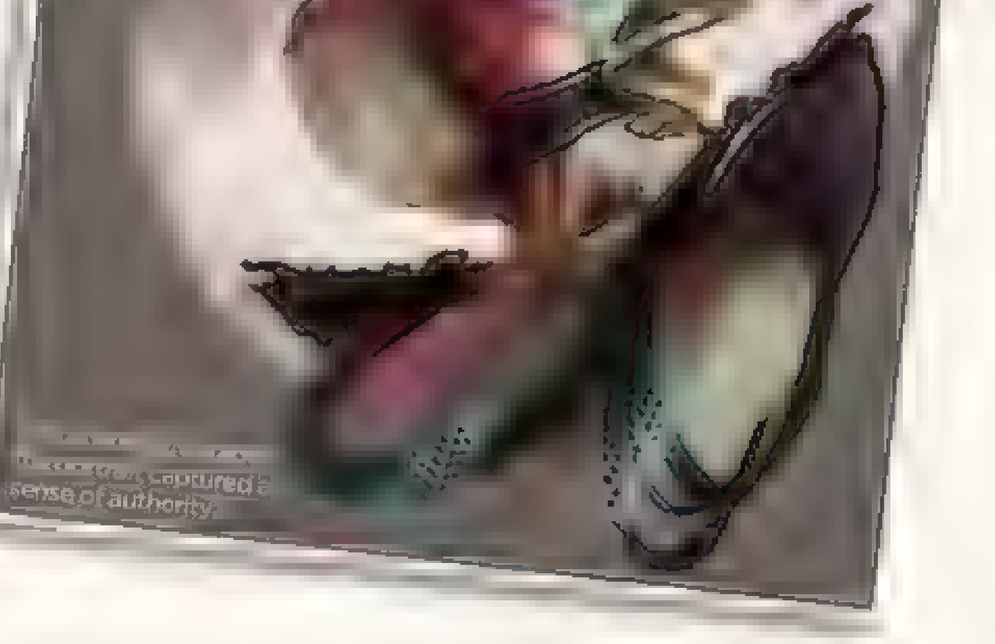
Winners

Image of the month

Even in the deepest, darkest corners of space, pomp and pageantry still prevail…









When Matthew read the challenge brief to create a portrait of a stately Alien Queen, he knew he had to give it a go. "I love aliens and I love portraits, so I had to get into this one," he says.

One of the in t a challenges was to create a creature with dign ty and rega beauty which can be tricky when imagin ng galactic royalty "It started off looking more like ET in drag! I used a picture of a giraffe for insp ration, and t evolved nto a sort of lizard a en diva I exper mented a lot with texture brushes and c pp ng masks, and even though it's st a bit rough in places I like how t came out

IMAGE TITLE **A Royal Portrait: The Alien Queen**
ARTIST **Matthew Grainger (Disco Matt)**
GALLERY **www.imaginefx.com/disco_matt**
GALLERY **www.bit.ly/myfx-292**

In its raw form, you can really see the giraffe influence in Matthew's painting shining through

"Matthew's vision of an alien queen is quirky and wonderfully fantastic, yet oddly believable. There's a majesty to the piece, from the queen's icy glare to her choice of finery." Nicola Henderson, Staff Writer

storemags.com

Join in!
www.imaginefx.com/myfx



The Tooth Fairy
Eric Schneider (Rabbit)
www.imaginefx.com/rabbit
www.bit.ly/myfx-299



"I particularly enjoyed this challenge because it was a chance to put a new spin on an old and established character. The Tooth Fairy is generally imagined as a sweet sparkly nymph, so creating the opposite was a lot of fun. For inspiration, I thought of what a tooth fairy would look like if it was in a Guillermo del Toro film, as his characters are always so spooky and otherworldly. I always enjoy the ImagineFX challenges, as it's a great way of bettering your art skills within a supportive community. I'm always learning something new."

David & Goliath – Fantasy Style
Juan Blanco (guang)
www.imaginefx.com/guang
www.bit.ly/myfx-309



"This was an interesting challenge, as I could put my own fantasy-art spin on a classic battle between good and evil. The first thing that sprung to mind was how best to depict Goliath, as I really wanted to play around with his size and scale. I initially imagined him as a huge towering figure with his head above the clouds, and the piece grew from there. I'm not really sure how David would manage to take him out, but it would certainly be an impressive showdown to watch."





Sacred Ritual
Vince Hewitt (Midscrawl)
www.imaginefx.com/midscrawl
www.bit.ly/myfx-october



"I wanted to show the 'sacred ritual' of the title actually working, with huge results possibly to the detriment of the people performing it. A huge demon melting his way out of a statue. I also wanted to complete the picture from start to finish using ArtRage, partly to test its potential and partly to achieve a painterly feel. I was happy with the results even though I used a very limited toolset within the program, mainly just the Oil brush and Palette knife."

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Ian Dean, on ian.dean@futurenet.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

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First steps

I wanted to write a short message to thank you for your magazine. I've been illustrating for around three years and have just finished my degree. I did a lot of soul searching about where I want to take my career and what my true passions are in illustration.

I've always wanted to go into concept art, but I felt the artwork was too complicated for me to achieve and I had never really touched digital art, having hand-drawn most of my work in the past.

Well, since buying your magazine for the past few months, I took the plunge and bought a graphics tablet and I haven't looked back. Although I've only been using the tablet for about two months I'm really proud of my progress and wanted to thank you for the helping hand you've given me.

As a thank you, I'd like to send you a piece of work I've just completed. I hope one day to feature in your magazine as a pro.

Matt Raff, via email



Space knight and giant cyborg polar bears – with an imagination like that, Matt will be back on our pages very soon.

Ian replies: Thanks for the kind words Matt, and the great painting. We hope to be seeing more of your art in the future.

I heart you

I have fallen in LOVE with your magazine! It has everything I have been looking for! The instructions are easy to follow and the art is always amazing!

Malchijah DeGraff, via Facebook

Ian replies: We're all blushing. Except Beren, who's used to such flattery.

New website reaction

The new site is perfect in every sense of the word. Clean and sleek with the stylistic design flair that's seen in your magazines and everything functions smoothly. I say ditch the old site altogether and make this new beauty the homepage.

Izzy Reza, via Facebook



Our new website is in the Beta stage. You're welcome to have a nose around it – let us know what you think!

Ian replies: Thank you for the comments on the new site – we aim to please. The site is still in the Beta stage and we'll be adding new gallery elements, search options and a new forum over the next month, so please do keep using it and telling us what you think of it.

Anatomy goes digital

I'd like to ask if the special Anatomy Essentials and How to Draw and Paint Anatomy issues are available to purchase in digital format? I would like to buy it through the App Store/Newsstand on my iPhone, but I'm not sure how to do it and where to find these issues.

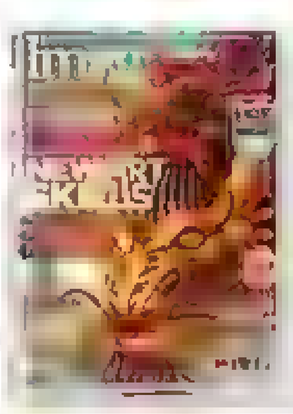
Jenifer Wong, via email

Ian replies: Good news Jenifer – you can buy the Anatomy specials digitally, via Zinio at **www.bit.ly/anatomy_digital**. We hope to get more Anatomy issues up on Apple Newsstand too, so keep checking.

Collect 'em all

I'm a big fan of your magazine and I try to purchase all of them so that I can keep my skills updated. Thank you for all the work you have put into this magazine so we can enjoy it. I have been searching for one issue that I missed, the June 2012 edition. I live in Portugal and I went to all the magazine shops but I couldn't find it anywhere. Can you help me, please?

Jorge Silva, via email



We've still got a few copies, but you need to move fast! See page 55 for details on how to get hold of one.

Ian replies: If you're a print subscriber, Jorge, then you can access the new Premium section of our new website to download back issues for free.



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Artists' opinions



"ImagineFX is the best published source of conceptual art information that I have ever seen. The magazine is a must-have investment for any aspiring concept artist who wants to take their skills to the next level."

Andrew Jones, concept artist

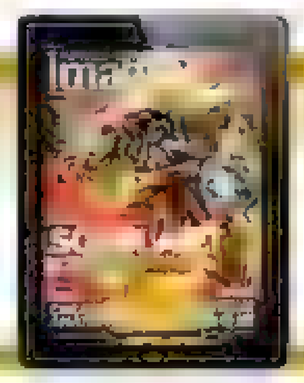


"ImagineFX is a unique resource for the science-fiction and fantasy community. It has invaluable tips and techniques for a range of software, and encourages aspiring artists to get their work in print and receive international exposure."

Jonny Duddle, freelance artist

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Artist Q&A

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERTS? LET US EASE YOUR ART-ACHE AT **HELP@IMAGINEFX.COM**

The ImagineFX panel

Kinman Chan



Having studied at Gnomon School of Visual Effects, Kinman has worked for Disney and Lucasfilm, and he also owns Kinkept Co.

www.sparetimer.blogspot.co.uk

Mark Molnar



Mark is a concept and visual development artist. He's busy doing freelance work for international film, game and animation companies.

www.markmolnar.com

McLean Kendree



An ImagineFX Rising Stars winner in 2011, Mclean now works at Kabam studios and has produced concept art for THQ, Hasbro and 38 Studios.

www.mcleanart.com

Jace Wallace



Jace has freelanced for magazines, book publishers and produced concept art. He's since been hired by Maxis to do concept art for Sims 3.

www.wakkawa.cghub.com

Mélanie Delon



Mélanie is a freelance fantasy illustrator. She works as a cover artist for several publishing houses, and on her personal artbook series.

melaniedelon.com

Francesco Lorenzetti



Francesco is a concept artist at Atomhawk Design. He enjoys working in traditional media and often goes to life-drawing sessions.

www.bit.ly/ifx-francesco

Paco Rico Torres



Paco is a freelance illustrator living in Spain who's produced art for several card games, magazines, books and role-playing games.

www.pacorico.blogspot.com

Question

Would you ever start from a silhouette, as opposed to greyscale/sketches, and then work up the details?

Sally Peters, England

Answer

Mark replies



In my professional work I use both techniques to develop a successful design. For example, to produce line work sketches it's really useful for industrial design-related tasks, such as vehicles, spaceships, mechs and so on. The two approaches work well for either fine detailing or figuring out the proper anatomy of a final character design for production purposes – for example, when creating a reference for 3D modellers.

I start with silhouettes if I have to create an iconic and recognisable creature or character without having to worry too much about the technical limitations of a production. This usually happens when I'm working on a pitch package. This is a richly illustrated document that shows the producers how the final film or game is going to look.

Silhouette is the most characteristic visual element in every person or animal because our eyes see that first before moving on to the face, hands and finally to the smaller details. The ability to recognise certain silhouettes stems from ancient times, where the survival of a species was dependent on this ability, such as recognising a shadow of a dangerous animal in the jungle. The most successful animation or film characters also have iconic silhouettes – that's how we can instantly differentiate them from others, even in a badly lit scene or environment. Think about Mickey Mouse, Batman or even Stewie Griffin.

I start this creature design as a demo for my students, in which we have to develop a fictional pitch package for a horror film. I'm keen to create a scary, unique-looking monster, but I don't want to give it a straightforward humanoid shape. Instead, I imagine a mass of old root like tentacles that are constantly in motion.



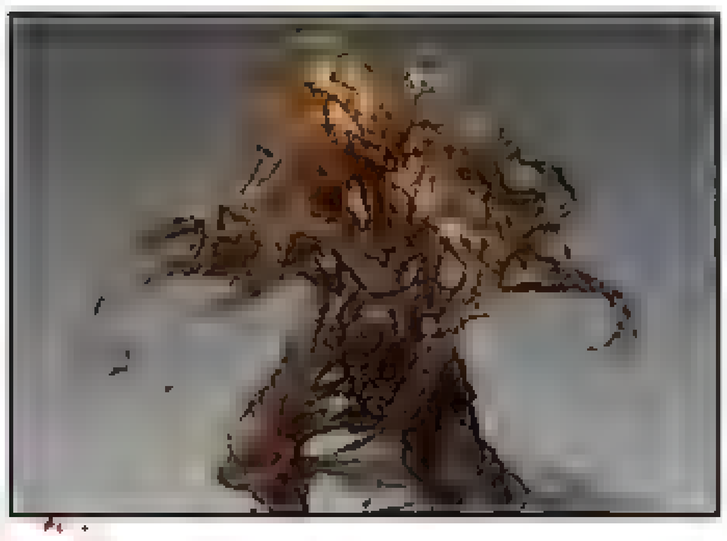
The initial humanoid silhouette is enhanced by the tentacle details.

I'm aware that in a horror films or games there can be a lot of under lit environments in which my creature would have to stand out. I want it to be recognisable, even if we see only parts of its limbs in a shot. That's why I start by developing a dynamic silhouette first and then build all the details on top. As you can see in the step-by-step, I retain the original silhouette and simply refine it during the detailing process.

Step-by-step:
Develop an iconic monster concept



1 As a first step I b ock n the who e s houette with a simp e default Round brush. I try to focus more on the dynamism of the creature and create a really nteresting shape langage want it to resemb e a humano d shape from afar, but a so g ve the feel of constant movement through its many tentac es



2 Before mov ng nto detail ng I experiment w th random shapes ins de the s.lhouette. I drop var ous textures on top by using Overlay and Soft Light layers to add extra no se to the creature. I use sk n textures of frogs and toads and other plant photos that are a good match to the root ke body of the creature



3 Now I f n the gaps and make the creature more realist c ook ng, and make the head and mbs the ma n foca po nt. After th s step the des gn s pretty much finished, so to make it presentab e I place the creature n an alleyway and composite everything to make t look as if t's a key frame from a film

Question
I want to paint a spewing volcano digitally, without it looking like a runny egg. Any tips?
Tad Shorley, US

Answer
Francesco replies



I'm using Tad's question to try and explain the ideas – and my assumptions – that are involved when I paint an environment, in this case an interesting volcano. A volcano is a geological formation that changes shape over time primarily through the red hot magma coming out, which cools and becomes solid, forming new channels over time

In this concept painting I imagine the volcano as a bubbling cauldron that's full of magma, and when there's a full moon the magma rises because of tidal pull. This astronom c phenomenon brings the magma to the top, where it escapes from the edges, leaking out so the volcano starts gradually raising.

It's interesting to think about how the volcano could have become active in the past. In this case there were many earthquakes that have caused landslides, due to the movement of tectonic plates in the region.

The abundant spills of magma create large incandescent rivers that over time have formed va leys and canyons. These are considerations that may suggest ideas for your environment scenarios. In general when I want an element to stand out in a concept or illustration I try to put it in a context that contrasts with its surroundings.



Here you see an intermediate stage of the concept. I refine the composition and volcano shape, then add magma and atmospheric effects such as smoke and fog

Artist's secret
PLAY WITH SILHOUETTE



Question
How can I depict a strong sense of movement?
Wade Hopkins, Australia

Answer
Kinman replies



When I draw characters running (or doing anything else for that matter) I take a good chunk of time to research and reference the action. The photographic studies of motion in Eadweard Muybridge's work are a great starting point.

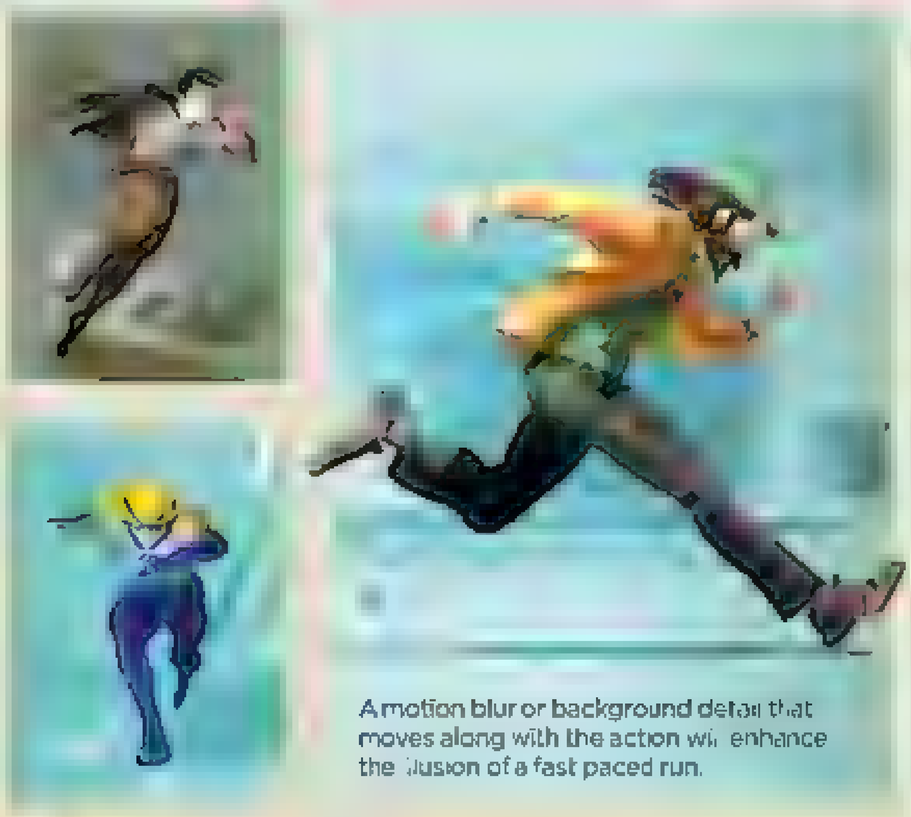
A good drawing in proper perspective and a very clear silhouette should sell the idea (look at example A). I recommend getting it right in the beginning so the details aren't put on poor foundations. A good tip for running is that arms and legs typically tend to counteract each other. As the right leg moves forward in space, so will the left arm.

Lighting only enhances the silhouette I've established (see B). I typically design shadow (or light) shapes to take up at least 70 per cent of the silhouette, to clarify the poses when viewed from far away. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rules.

After I've figured out my designs, I'll make my brush strokes and the background go with the grain of movement. I can then add a bit of motion blur for the final bits, always remembering that the pose and silhouette is what tells my character's story.



Proper drawing and a clear silhouette are the foundations for communicating the action. After that we can place importance on the lighting to enhance the silhouette.



A motion blur or background detail that moves along with the action will enhance the illusion of a fast paced run.

Question
What are some simple ways of introducing depth to an image?
Lee Winterburn, England



Painting the arm in perspective, hidden by the fist, increases the depth sensation of the image more than simply painting the arm from a frontal viewpoint.

Answer
Paco replies



There are many ways to add depth to an image. Probably the best one is to paint elements hiding other objects. This may sound silly, but many people tend to paint every single element on an image perfectly visible and not hidden by other elements or obscured by perspective. By doing this it creates frontal and bi-dimensional images, so always try to overlap elements on your image whenever possible, and avoid excessively frontal figures. Perspective theory is complex, but is well worth the effort to learn.

Colours and their intensity can play a key role when it comes to paint depth. Try painting the backgrounds with light, cold, low-contrasting colours, and the elements in the middle-ground and foreground with more dark and intense colours.

Avoid painting an image with the same intensity and hues on all the levels of depth. Placing elements on the foreground (next to the camera) can be a good strategy. Having three different layers on your image (background, middle-ground and foreground) can help to improve the feeling of depth sensation, too.

Question
How can I draw a dragon with scales and feathers, without it looking messy or weird?
Frankie Wallington, Scotland

Answer
Jace replies



The fantastic thing about painting a feathered dragon is that feathers are very similar in structure to scales. Feathers and scales are both typically round-diamond shapes that overlap each other in an offset manner. One problem with painting scales is that they can become a bit repetitive and therefore create a lot of visual noise.

Because dragons are traditionally flying reptiles, the first thing I do is find reference photographs of alligators and large birds. Alligators are great as reference subjects because they have many different types of textures that make up their skin. The face of an alligator is generally smooth, while their backs become rougher with larger, spiky scales. This is similar to how the feathers of large birds work as well, small feathers in the face with large crowning feathers on the back of the head.

Now all I have to do is visualise how the feathers and scales will transition. A simple solution is to have the feathers emerge from underneath the scales, starting small and growing in size the denser the feathers become.

Question
I'm new to digital art – can you show how to use reference in character design?
Nigel Marwood, England



This is a concept for a possible sci-fi gladiator. His fighting method involves going on the offensive because he's only equipped with attacking weapons.

Answer
Francesco replies



Every time you create a character that's based on a period of history it makes sense to spend time researching it. I find it helpful to track down historical references that will help me create original ideas and give a more consistent look to the character.

The first thing that comes to mind is a futuristic setting for a take on the Roman gladiator. I want my concept to reflect the look of a traditional gladiator, adding sci-fi elements to the armour and weapons.

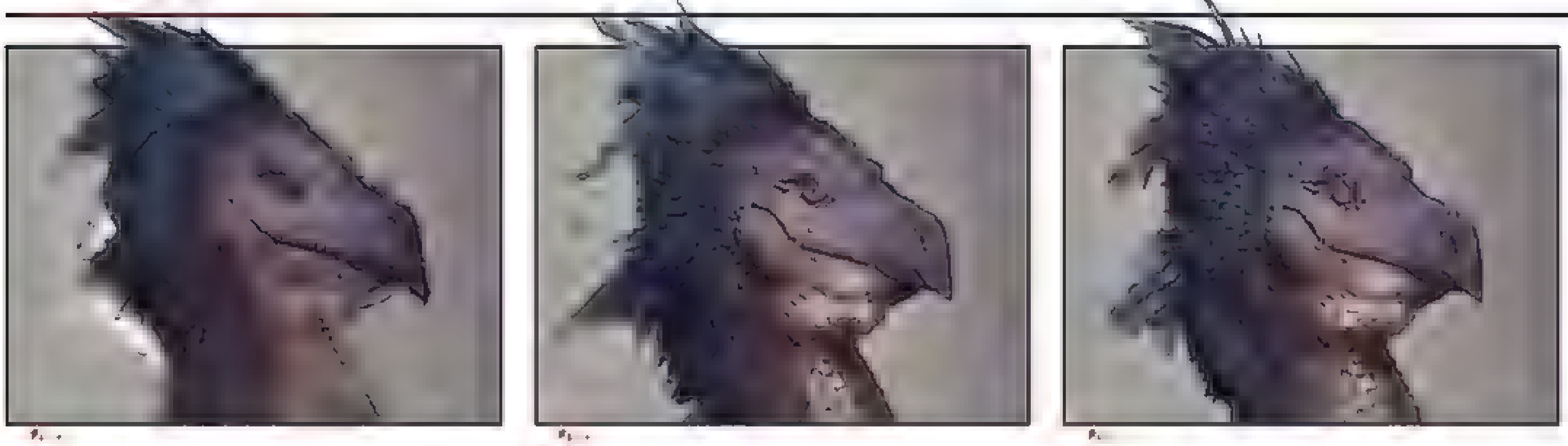
I mix the elements of two types of Roman gladiator: the Thracian and the Secutor. Using these as inspiration, I paint a rounded helmet that won't become trapped in an opponent's net, and a full-face shield to protect against the trident.

I then draw two straps, one with a bigger plate that protects the neck against heavy blows. I give the armour a chunky appearance and create a dull metal that's lighter than the typical Roman armour. The abdomen is covered with a belt, light metal plates and a metal mesh to protect the groin. I want an element to reinforce the idea of the sci-fi gladiator, so I give him a prosthetic lower limb. His weapons are a double blade and a straight smaller blade that can be fired at his adversary.

Artist's secret

LINE WORK IS ALL ABOUT DESIGN

Step-by-step: Give a dragon some feathers



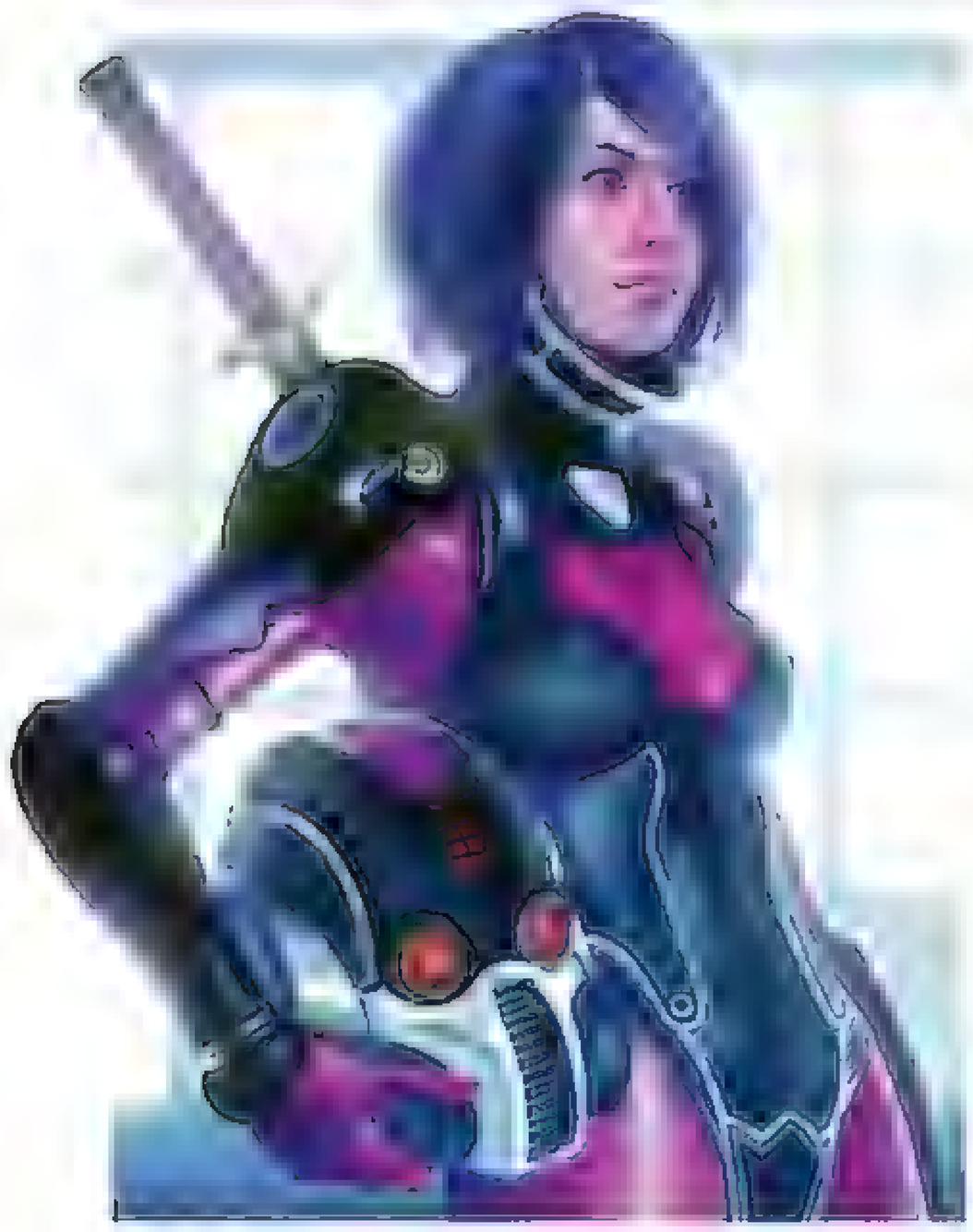
1 The Shoebill is a prehistoric-looking bird so I use it as my start point. I begin with a dynamic silhouette. After sketching that out, I place down basic colours. Following my alligator references, I paint the upper body parts in cool colours and the chest with a warmer, paler colour.

2 I use three different types of scales for the skin texture, the white ones are smaller and the most feather-like. I use these scales to transit on into the feathers. In areas where the feathers start emerging, I make the scales more chaotic, as if they're bursting out from under the scales.

3 The Lasso tool is what I use most when defining feathers. After I have an area Lassoed, I paint the edges with a large Round Soft brush. Once I get down all the highlights, I go back with a darker colour and paint the cast shadows under each feather to gain a sense of the depth.

Question
How can I achieve the effect of dousing my character in a bright white light without losing detail and colour?

Chris Kitson, Canada



If you have a solid painting then creating a backlighting glow effect using Screen and Overlay Mode layers, and the Gaussian Blur filter is straightforward.

Answer
Paco replies

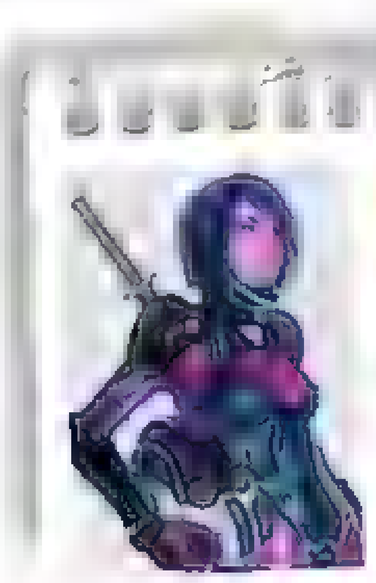


Painting a character surrounded by light using Photoshop is relatively easy. It's a tricky effect to recreate with traditional media, but it's one of these things that digital painting has made a lot easier to do.

The one thing that you must bear in mind is that applying these cool-looking, easy-to-achieve effects won't make a poor painting any better. If you don't put enough effort into creating your character then the image won't work, no matter what else you do to it.

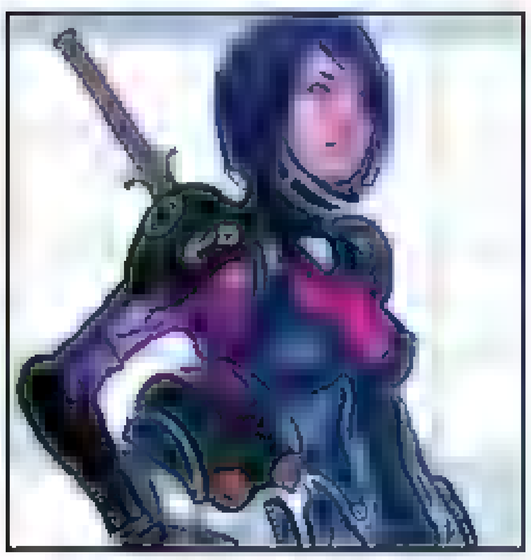
With that caveat out of the way, let's begin the process. The elements you need are an image of your character backlit (that usually means, white or almost white background, and the character in shadows with light around the edges of his/her silhouette). This is important because if the background either isn't bright enough or the character isn't lit from behind, the final result won't make much sense.

Once these elements are in place, you just need to use Low Opacity Overlay and Screen Mode layers. In these layers, paint a white outline around the character and then blur it using the Gaussian Blur. You'll achieve a decent backlighting effect without hiding the details on the figure.

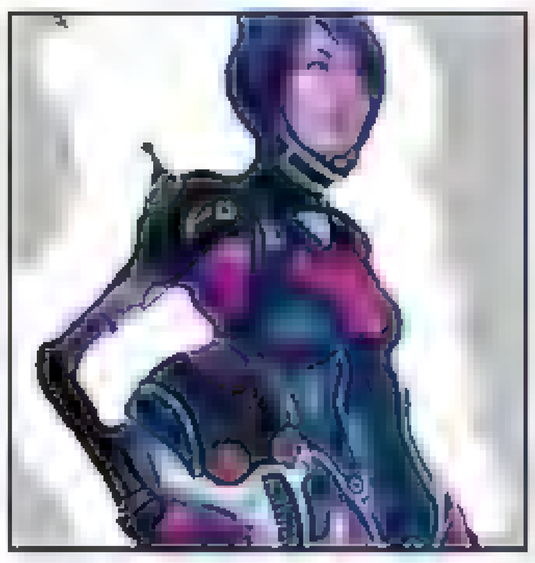


Artist's secret
EASY WAYS TO SELECT A FIGURE

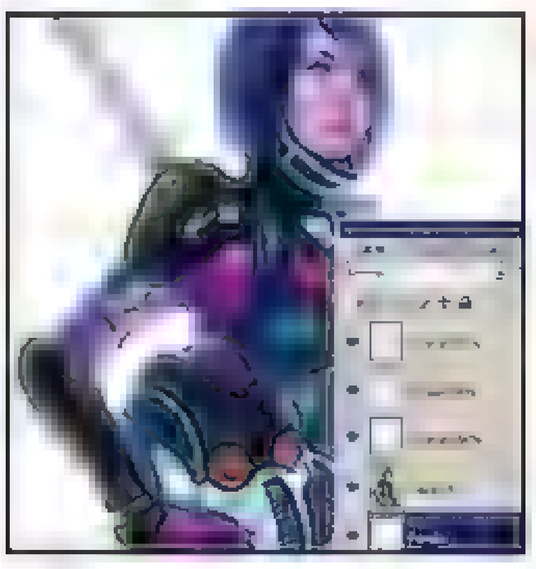
Step-by-step: Brighten up your character



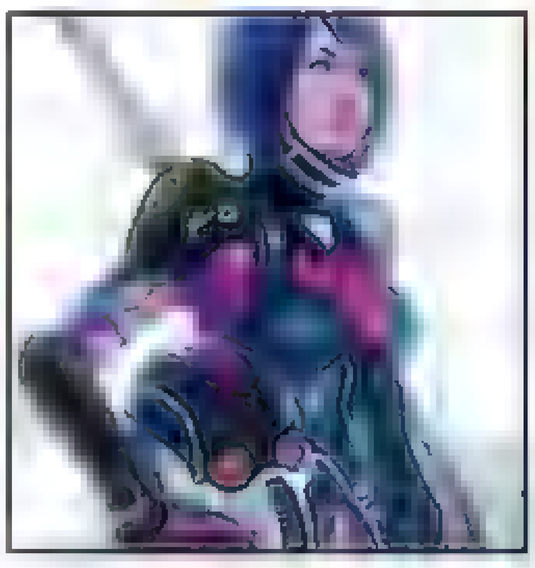
1 First, you need to finish the painting. Here, as you can see, I've painted all the light in the background and placed the character in shadows, lit from behind. I strongly recommend painting the background and the character on two separate layers, as well as keeping the edges of the character clean. Doing this will make the following steps much easier.



2 Then in a new layer paint a thick white line around the character. You'll eventually blur this line and it'll become the glow that's surrounding the figure, so don't paint it randomly. Note that you'll need to paint in the areas where the light around the silhouette of the character will be stronger. Once you've done this, use the Gaussian Blur tool to blur it (around 100 pixels).

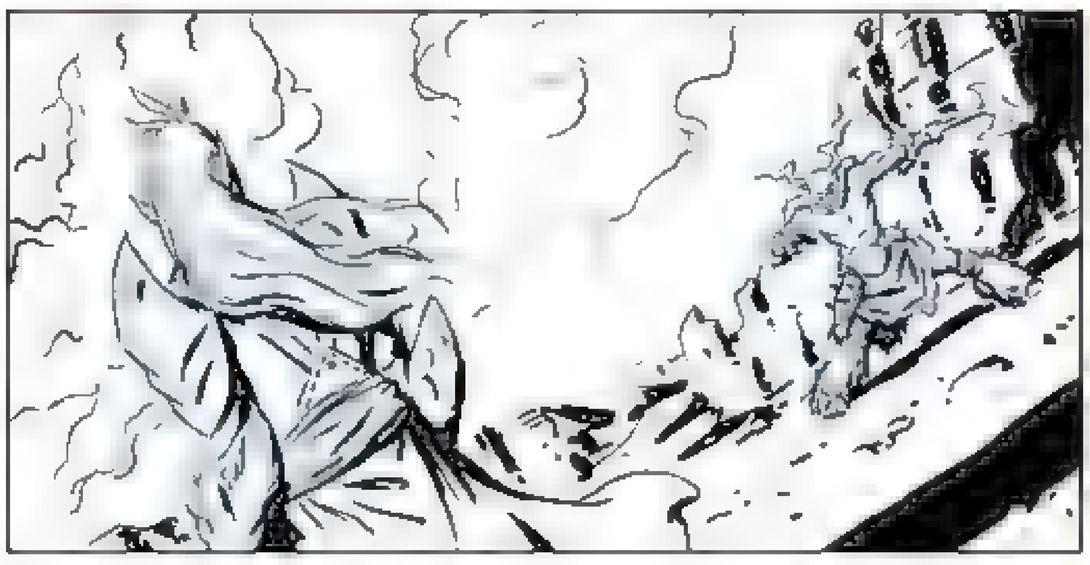


3 Next you need to copy that layer several times (or repeat step two on different layers), decrease their opacity and set their mode to Overlay and/or Screen. The number, mode and opacity of the layers is up to you. For this image I used an Overlay layer with 56 per cent Opacity, a Screen layer with 34 per cent Opacity and an Overlay layer set to 15 per cent Opacity.



4 Now you just need to erase the white glow outside the edge of the character. If you've done things correctly and kept the silhouette of the character clean (so there's nothing on the character's layer) then it should be easy to select the character, invert the selection, and delete the unwanted glow. Finally, just fix whatever else needs to be fixed in the image.

Question
What tips do you have for creating striking comic panels?
Andrew James, England



The moment before a fight. By putting the camera behind one of our characters, the viewer will identify more with him. The camera angle reinforces the drama of the moment, as does the depth of field. The camera is lower to the ground as it's looking up at the scene, too.



This panel depicts a straight-on side view, and doesn't favour any character. Instead of having a dramatic depth of field, the characters are on a similar plane. If you use passive or neutral panels well, then when you finally use a dramatic panel it'll have more impact.

Answer
McLean replies



I think one of the most important aspects of drawing comic panels is figuring out what the appropriate mood or tone of the moment is. A static, straight-on shot may not be the most exciting way to show a climactic battle. Additionally, dramatic camera angles may be distracting if you're trying to depict a conversation over a cup of coffee.

If you're showing a confrontation depending whose shoulder we're looking over, we may side more with one character and perceive the other character as more the aggressor. If the camera is looking up at a character then it may communicate strength, whereas a camera looking down on a character can create a feeling of smallness or meekness.

Also consider depth of field. Are some objects in the panel really close to us, while others are far away? Just keep asking yourself if that cool idea you have for a panel is appropriate for the moment.

Finally, if you want to get serious about drawing comics, I would recommend several books: Drawing Comics by Scott McCloud, Framed Ink by Marcos Mateu-Mestre and How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way were great at introducing many of these concepts to me as a youngster.

Artist's secret
EXPAND YOUR VIEW

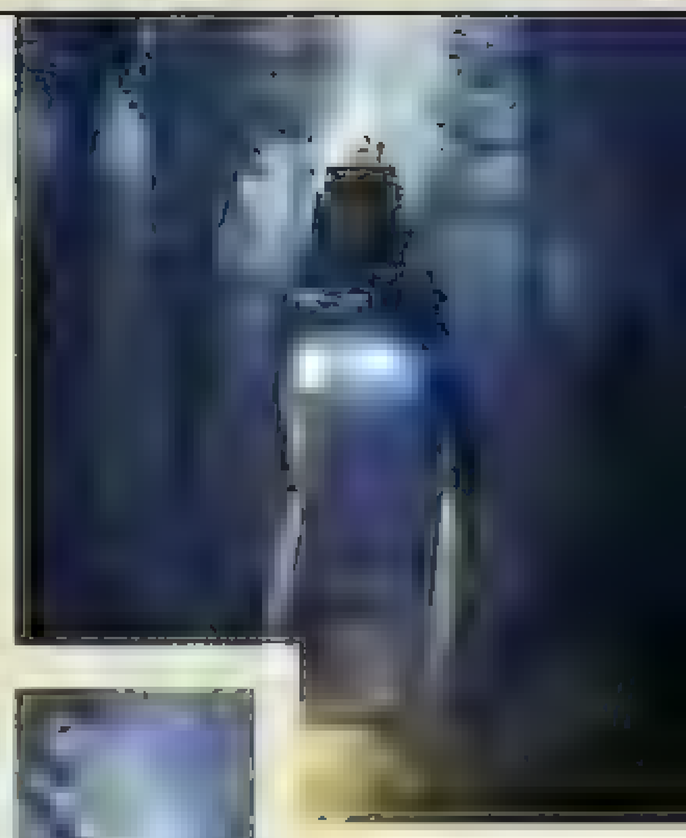
Question
What's a simple way of achieving detail in a night scene?
Fran DeMarco, US

Answer
Mark replies



The two easiest ways to add details and realism to a night illustration is by using natural and artificial light sources. The natural light source could be the moon, which has a cold, desaturated colour. Consider using warmer, more saturated colours for the artificial lights. This can create depth and you'll also use these lights to reveal the original colours of the objects in your image.

Using the moon as a light source enables me to introduce some aerial perspective and subtle value changes. For the main focal points I use the mech's warm artificial lights. This helps me not just to show the original greenish tone of the swamp, but with using a complementary colour pair (blue-orange) I can separate my main point of interest from the background.





In a night scene focus on the silhouettes and slight value changes to create depth (Left, fig.1)

The art fidal light helps reveal the origina colours of the objects in your image (Left, fig.2).

Question
Can you help me improve the presentation of my concept art?
Viki Zarita, Venezuela

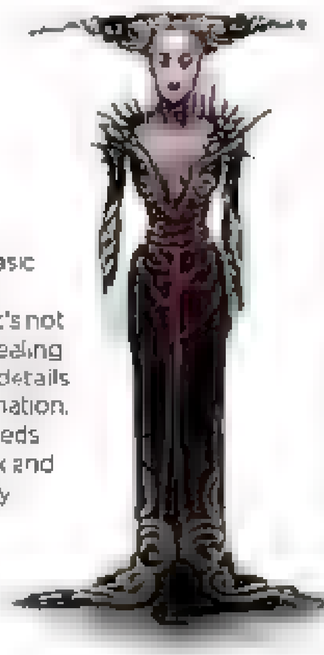
Answer
Mélanie replies



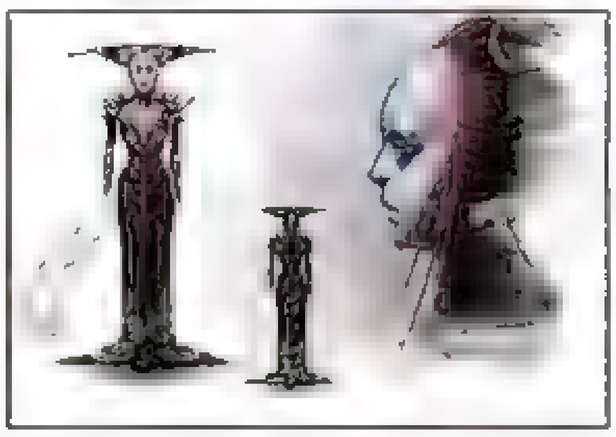
Concept art can easily become formulaic, in terms of render quality, props and so on. The solution is to add more information and life to the concept. For example, I can add some quick close-ups of some details of the clothes, like the pattern of the dress. It's a part of the character's identity and so needs to be noticed.

Another idea is to add a close-up of the head, quickly sketched but worked up enough to show what the character would look like. Here I choose to do the side of the head because I didn't draw a side view of the character, but the front is also a great addition to the concept sheet.

You can also include some prop close-ups, such as weapons or objects the character will wear.



This is a basic character concept. It's not really appealing and lacks details and information. It really needs more work and personality.



With more details and sketches the concept looks more interesting. Some text, like the name or any other important information, is also a nice touch.

Question
What effects can I achieve by playing around with different perspectives?
Ben Johnston, US



Answer
Kinman replies



You should only introduce different perspectives if they say something important. Avoid complex perspective scenarios if they don't add to the story. Below I explain how I approach different scenarios

In image A I want to give a fish-eye lens look or have my character turn a corner, so I bring two vanishing points close to each other. Alternatively, in image B I am still using two vanishing points, only now placing each on its own horizon line. Now the same character can explore a new scenario within the same image. The transition pose is a key factor

When introducing larger scale into my piece I'll add a vertical vanishing point. As you can see in image C the clouds have their own horizon line, as if they belong to another world

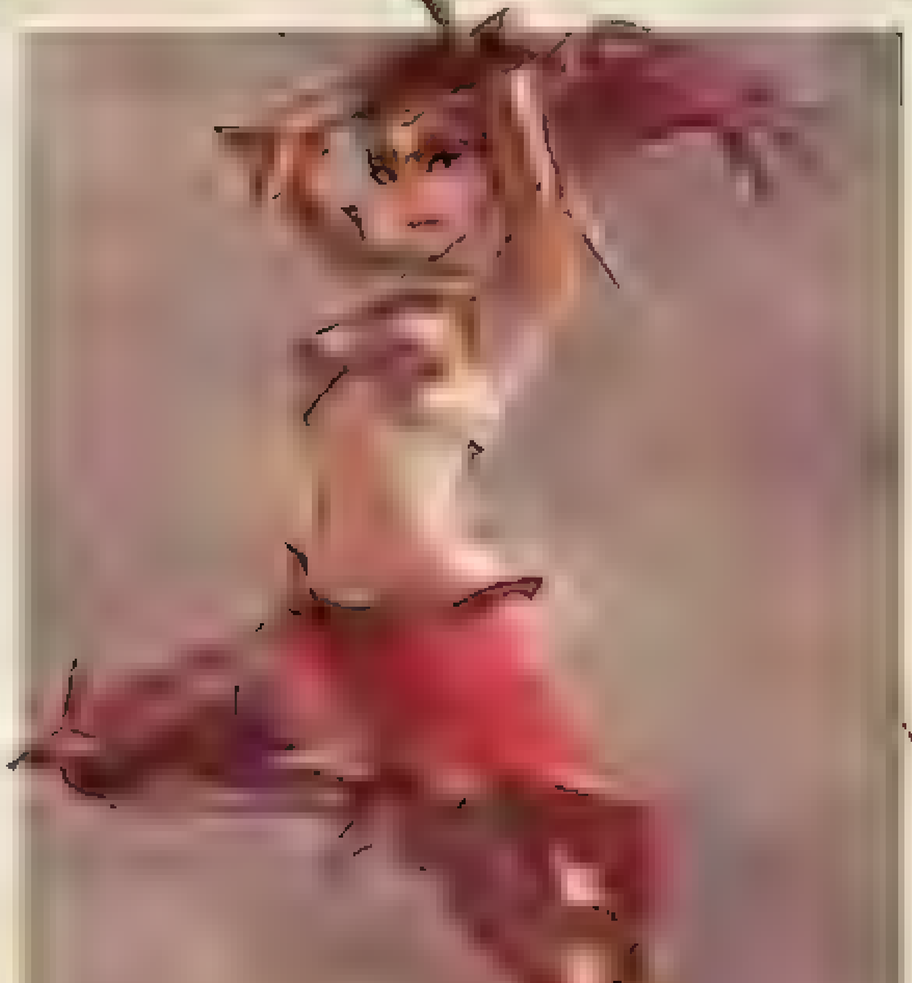
I'll also introduce a new vanishing point if there's an added piece to the story. In image D there's threat from the sky



Adding vertical vanishing points can sell the scale of larger objects in a scene. Adding a second horizon for clouds can create added distance. For this I use Carapace (by Epic Games) for perspective, and Photoshop for brushwork

Artist's secret
A TIP TO AVOID CONFUSION

Question
I need a new, dynamic pose for my character. Any tips?
Clarisa Howell, China



Even though my character's wearing ridged armour the pose still flows nicely.

Answer
Jace replies



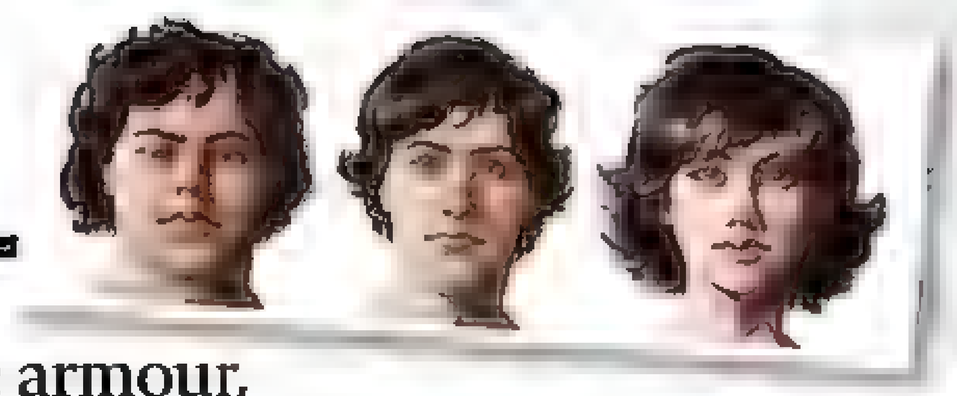
Dynamic poses, while difficult to achieve, are the most fun to paint. Using reference is always a good idea, but unless that reference follows guidelines on what makes a smooth dynamic pose work well, the reference won't be much help.

Remember not to have the figure's pose flowing in too many directions. I try to focus the character's movements as simply as possible. Furthermore, a dynamic pose needs to have a fully committed action. A pose that has followed through with its intended action reads much better than a pose that's just started a movement.

For example, if the character is throwing a punch I don't draw them starting the punch but finishing it with their limbs at the end points. Another example is a character jumping. I'll show the character flying through the air rather than preparing them to start the jump action. This way there's no confusion on what the intended pose is supposed to be portraying.



The character's skeleton shows the movement lines that I base the pose on. I use every aspect of the character to make sure the pose reads natural and smooth. Her extremities need to work together to create a cohesive, believable look



Next month

ON SALE: **1 March**

Make the most of one reference photo

Question

How would you create bone armour, and what brushes would you use?

Joy Yeung, Taiwan

Answer

Mélanie replies



To create armour with bone, the first thing to do is to create a lot of sketches, to identify the design that you want to explore. You can have a lot of fun and freedom doing this because the combinations are unlimited. Here, I keep it quite simple: some thorax bones around her chest with a huge animal skull on her shoulder. You can of course mix human and animal bones to achieve a cool look.

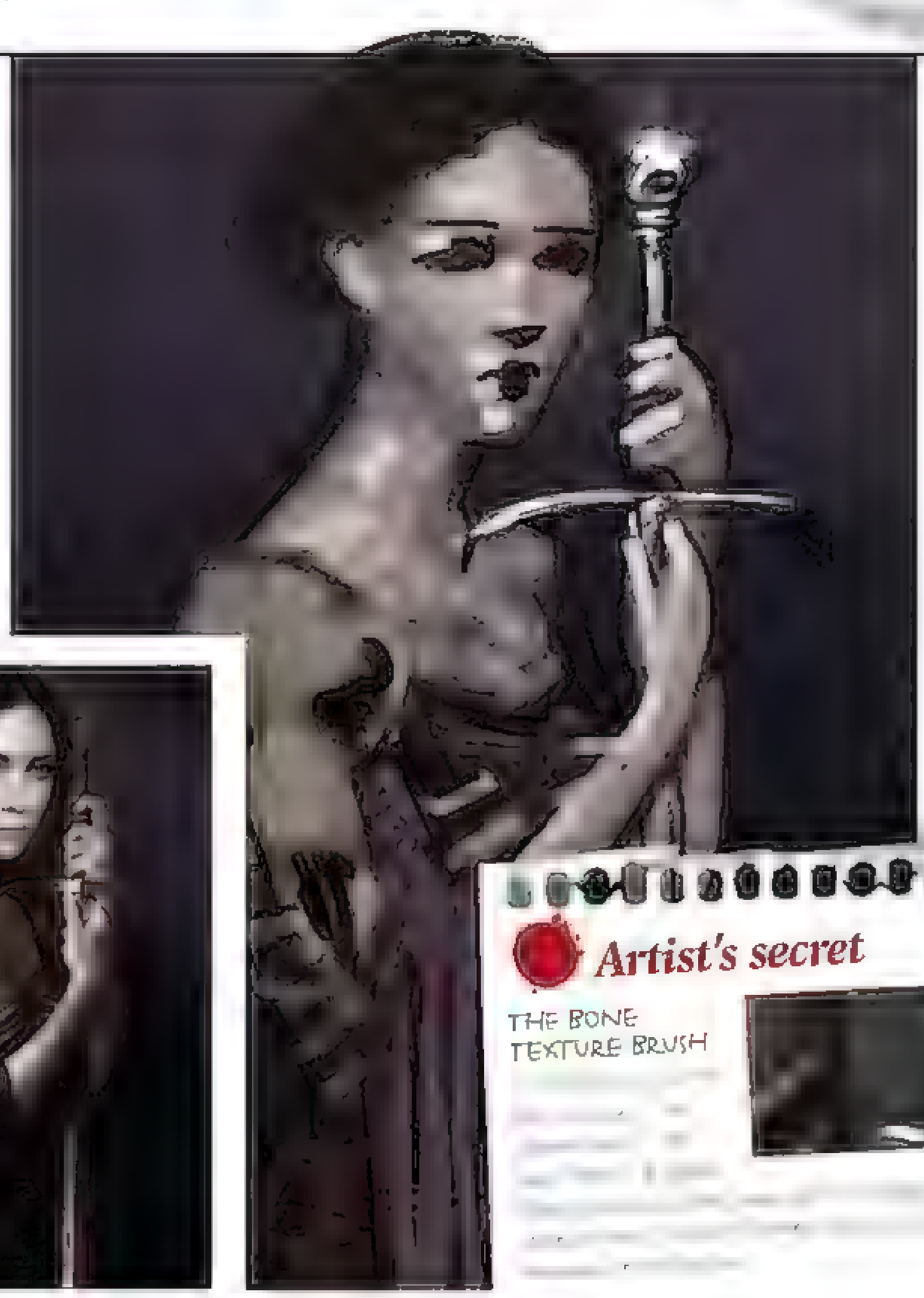
Once I'm happy with the design, I can start painting. I choose my colour scheme: always mid-tone colours for the base and the sketch. For the bones I pick a desaturated beige, and start working the whole armour with it. At this stage I'm using a basic Round edge brush, because I don't want any texture for the moment.

Next I play with the light, increasing the curves of the bones and skull to make them look more realistic. I pick a bright beige for the light and a dark brown for the shadows. Both tones need to be coloured (never use pure white and black). If they're not, the shading will look dirty.

Now I start working on the texture. This part is important because it'll define the bones and I need a lot of texture to make them look convincing. For this step I use several custom brushes and different layer effects, such as Soft light or Screen, to achieve the texture I want.

I finally add more details and fun elements to the bones, such as some war paint on the shoulder skull.

This is the very first sketch of the armour. At this point it's just to get a rough base and a quick idea of the design.



Don't forget to work the different elements as a whole (same light, same colour scheme and so on), otherwise the armour will look fake and not a part of the character.



Artist's secret

THE BONE TEXTURE BRUSH



Step-by-step: Paint realistic bone armour

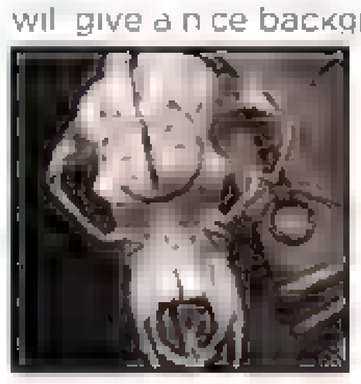
1 The first thing I do is add volume to the bones and skull. I slowly work the lights and shadows until I've got something close to what I have in mind. Then I add the details, such as cracks all around the skull. I really like those kind of small details because they're not obvious yet manage to bring something really special to the subject.



2 Once the base is done I work on the texture. Bones aren't plastic so I'm adding a lot of texture, with a Dynamic Shape brush with Opacity Jitter set to 100 per cent. With this brush I simply draw several brush strokes, which creates a lot of surface and colour variations to the bones. I also use a different layer mode to increase



3 I'm almost there now. All I have to do is add some details here and there such as some metal parts in the skull, blood and some war paint. Those details will give a nice background to the character and more realism to the armour. I also paint some dots of light to add dynamism to the bones and increase the contrast of the whole armour.



Got a digital art problem? Is an image giving you artache? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at **help@imaginefx.com** or write to **Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.**

THE ART OF IAN MILLER

Making sense of Ian's complex, dream-driven art is easier than making sense of his emails – but just as enjoyable!



Immediately with Ian Miller's [illegible]. A polite British gent with a taste for baffling eccentricity, each of his emails comes with a DIY Photoshopped vignette. Some are scratchy illustrations on photos of [illegible] and yourself peering and quizzing, but he always gets straight to the point.

HUNTER OF THE DARK 2

Ian's 1970s book cover for a HP Lovecraft story. This one's unpublished as [illegible]

"I've a few minds of [illegible] questions [illegible] appeal. I am keen to think of fashion," states one. "I still need a [illegible] about my place of birth. It was Glasgow," says another. "Ian Peverall sounds rather fine and I might [illegible] if I get a chance [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]."

Returning a wealth of little treasures, Ian's art also sucks in the mind, the intricate pen work, the mixture of [illegible] shapes and chaotic lines, these visions of haunted woods, flying fish and startled rabbits. His art reminds [illegible] Ralph Bakshi and [illegible] has shown [illegible] with him on the 1978 animated classic *Lord Of The Rings*. It also converted Ralph's Beast to portraits Ian's first set [illegible] *The Dream Days* [illegible] and it also [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Ian's [illegible] *Shrek*, *The Ant Bully* and *Escape From Planet Earth*. Even if ultimately much of Ian's work [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

ARTIST TIP

PURSUE EXCELLENCE

"The pursuit of excellence must be the driving force behind any creative endeavour. Nothing else will do. There are no short cuts (I'm talking about digital software!) or magic formulas. Never make excuses for bad work. Be honest about what you do. Treat people with respect and help fellow artists whenever you can."



BOOM!
Inspired by a box of theatre props as a child, Ian has developed a style inspired by his subconscious. And green rabbits.



A VISIONARY ART WIZARD



The artist's introduction to fantasy was more of the lush, green and wondrous variety than goblin kings and dank underworld things.

X-RAY CROCS AND SWAMP WATER

Fantasy came to Ian through the costumes and backstage props of 1950s London theatre. Soon after the Second World War Ian's mum worked for a leading costumier

> "My toy chests overflowed with castoffs from film and theatre productions"

in Covent Garden and, he says, brought back raw material from the "illusion machine" that got his formative mind whirling. "My toy chests overflowed with the castoffs and oddments from a score of film and theatre productions. I was receptive to everything that was weird and wonderful. Fact and fiction were very much in communion," he recalls, "and strange worlds could still be reached through the backs of cupboards if you knew where to look. Castles were painted on glass, bubblegum was made from Everglades swamp water, and crocodiles had X-ray vision."

Initially studying sculpture in 1967 at Central Saint Martins College, London Ian switched to painting in his second year. He insists it was after this that he cut his teeth on illustration, but he didn't have to wait long. When he graduated in 1970 he immediately found work as a jobbing illustrator in the capital. "At college I watched, listened, asked questions and tested the waters, but I didn't make any great strides technically. That came later," he says.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO SAN FRANCISCO

Soon after, in the mid 1970s, Ian and his wife were commissioned to work in San Francisco – a healthy slice of serendipity, as it turned out. "It was an adventure that went a bit wrong, in the first instance anyway," says Ian. Confusion at the airline meant the pair were grounded for six weeks. A piece of Ian's art was to serve as their ticket out.

A Gormenghast illustration he had created for a fantasy calendar the year before had caught the eye of animator Ralph Bakshi, just as he was looking for concept artists for his new project, 20th Century Fox's first ever animated film, Wizards. "Ralph based me in a Roman hotel's in New York, for whom I was illustrating Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles at the time, and flew me down to L.A.," he says. "He offered me a job on the spot on the strength of that Gormenghast piece."

The look and feel of Wizards evolved thanks to the open direction of Ralph

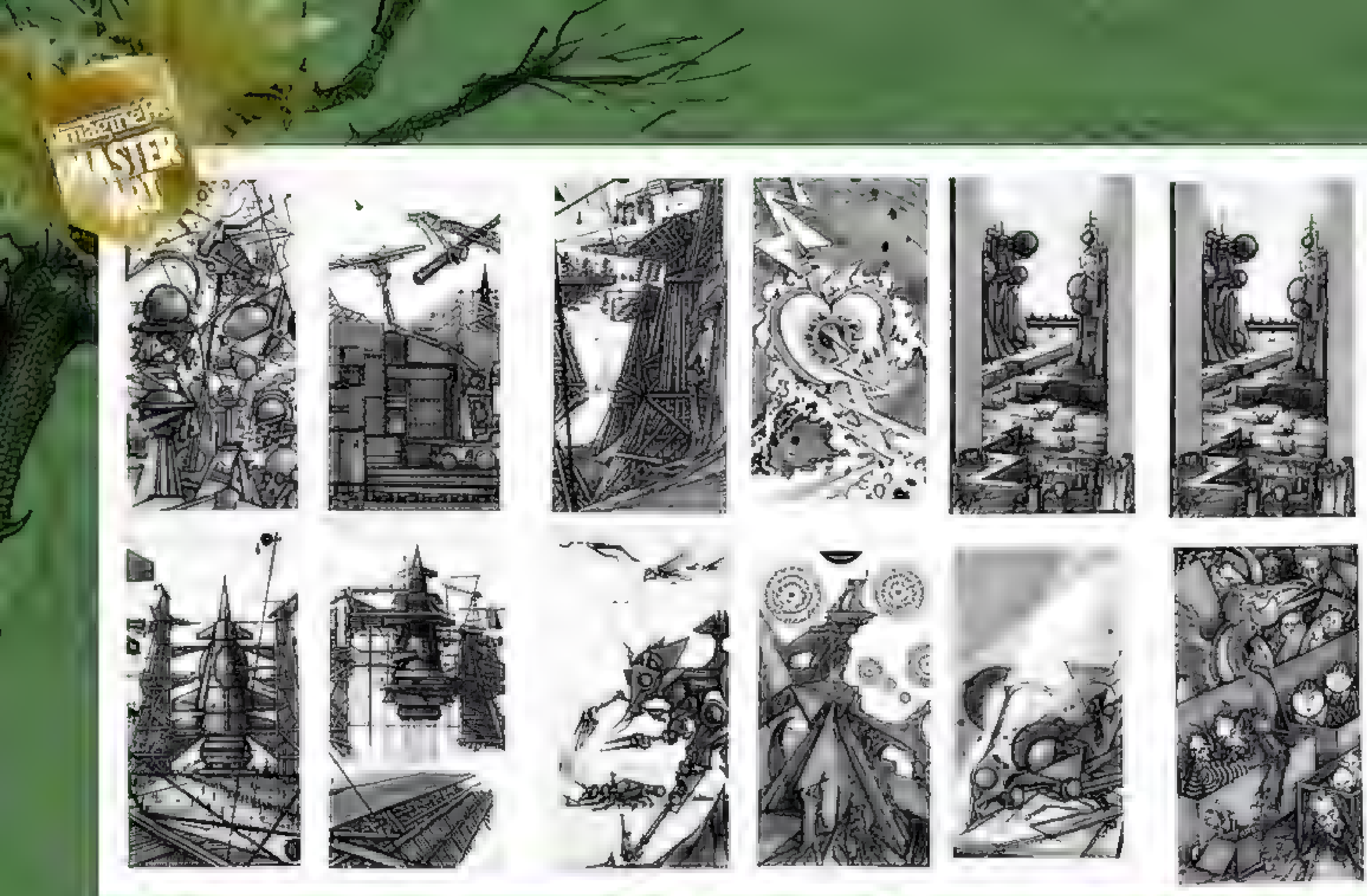


RIFT

"This was a private commission for Paul and LizAnn Lizotte in the US. It was an open brief. Three panels of ink on Hammer illustration board."

RIVER OF DEATH

Originally entitled Death of the Reich. [illegible] was given image to [illegible] Workshop roll [illegible]



and the inspired visions of the artists. "It was a remarkable experience/a very charged atmosphere," says Ian. "I designed and drew backgrounds for the most part and even did a couple of voiceovers for two elfin characters. It seemed then that anything was possible. You lived every second of it, both in an emotional and technical sense. There was a lot of sparks."

Back to London and Ian's next adventure getting a publisher for his book The Green Dog Trumpet. An art book of five stories with no text, it proved a tough sell for some publishers, but an invaluable experience for the artist. "In some ways it set the mould for everything that came after," says Ian. "I went on to create other sequential stories, which I then thought of as stills and tableaux from film storyboards." It was Roger Dean asked Ian if he wanted to do a book on his Dingwalls Dream imprint (The Green Dog Trumpet was born around this time of tramping his portfolio around London / soft-core porn magazine Knave Only allowed him an illustration too). "It did a wonderful job of reproducing my fine line work," recalls Ian. "So I was more than happy to do more when the offers came. The art director then was Roger Watt and he was one of the best I ever worked with."

PERFECTING GOTHIC CHAOS

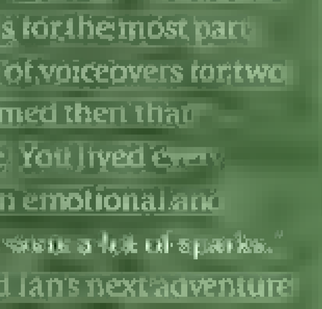
Etchings hung pride of place around Ian's family home. As a child he'd stand on a chair to spend hours staring straight at them. "I found that if you stared long enough they sometimes came alive and started to move... but that's another story.

WINTER

"In the late 19th I was given a pretty open brief to do something on the seasons. I came up with this watercolour with pen and ink."

VITAL STATISTICS

A man of the mind, dark woods and fog



Date of birth
11 November 1943

Place of birth
Pervaded by mean Glasgow

Current location
Brighton England

Favourite artists
Dürer Braque Ensor Kandinsky, Kippenberger, Kuhn The whole German expressionist movement Goodman Beaver Samuel Palmer

Books read in tandem
In the Shadow of the Sword by Tom Holland, and Bear Stories by Peter Wesser

Sunny beach or dark room
Dark wood cut by shafts of [illegible]

Crappiest film you love
Crap by and love don't [illegible] and if they did I would be served [illegible]

The meaning of life
It's wonderful, don't know the words to any song all the way through. The fog was always there near Kew, but there was the Pagoda of course

Website
www.ianmiller.org



LIFE ON MARS





WIZARDS

Castle city Scarab, in Ralph Bakshi's film Wizards. Both images were used in the film.

Early on Ian explored the etching process, then discovered Rotring technical pens, later combining them with wooden handle drawing pens. "Giving me a greater flexibility and economy in the style of my line work," he says. But he's also an enlightened traditionalist, using SketchBook Pro, Painter and Photoshop when the piece requires it.

Although he creates work with titles such as Art, that early ability to be in love with the environment of a piece of artwork hasn't been spent enough for his creative imagination.

BALROG

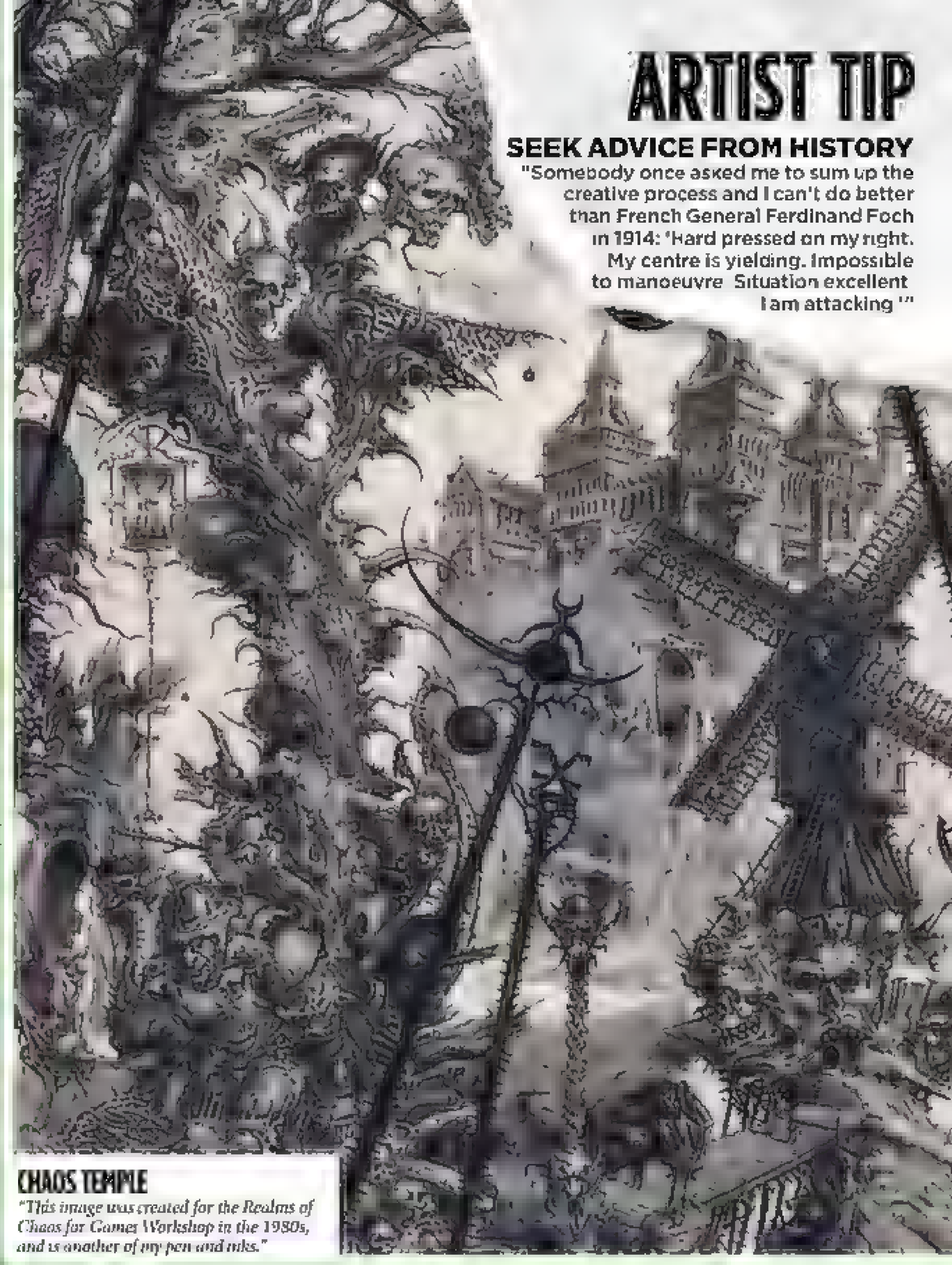
"Here's a B&W prep piece for two finished coloured drawings. It's a private commission from a guy in Vancouver, 2011."



ARTIST TIP

SEEK ADVICE FROM HISTORY

"Somebody once asked me to sum up the creative process and I can't do better than French General Ferdinand Foch in 1914: 'Hard pressed on my right. My centre is yielding. Impossible to manoeuvre. Situation excellent. I am attacking.'"



CHAOS TEMPLE

"This image was created for the Realms of Chaos for Games Workshop in the 1980s, and is another of my pen and inks."

Ian's work is dripping with such unnerving influences," says he. "I prefer to tap the source, my subconscious. I am my dreams and nightmares, and these are the things I choose to die in the light of day."

How do these gothic psychedelic nightmare visions fit in with the world of fantasy? Ian's not too bothered about that. "I don't give a hoot about how my own work is labelled," he says. "I associate labels with myopia. Rather than describe and enlighten, they often inhibit, divide and alienate people out. 'I'm this, you're that,' our label is more important than yours. Rather than engaging with the idea of what is it we all have in common."

THE PHILOSOPHER

Perhaps it's no surprise that Ian has been hit on the head at various points in his life. As well as being clobbered on his noggin in the middle of a party meeting as a child, Ian also sought out the rough art of kendo. By the time he was reunited with Ralph for work on the Cool World film, Ian had had some sense knocked into him. "I was quivering when I went to work on Cool World and I think this threw Ralph a little," he confesses. "Because he thought I would behave like an evil Hobbit. I told him people had been knocking me over the head for years during kendo and had calmed me down."

> I prefer to tap the source, my subconscious... I am my dreams and nightmares

Ian's philosophical about most things – being attacked by a large bamboo stick, people's take on his art, even the culture that shaped his own cultural tastes. There are racial markers, says Ian, myths and legends, migratory influences even that touch and shape us all. That said, these markers, the ethos itself, is continually updating and evolving as is the creative process. "The only constant in life is change."

This seems like a squarely Socratic sentiment. "It was either Diogenes or Socrates' dog Jimmy that said that," says Ian. "But things are temporal. The Japanese describe it as 'the floating, passing world'. Yesterday is ashes, tomorrow is wood... only today does the fire burn brightly."

THE WAIT IS OVER...



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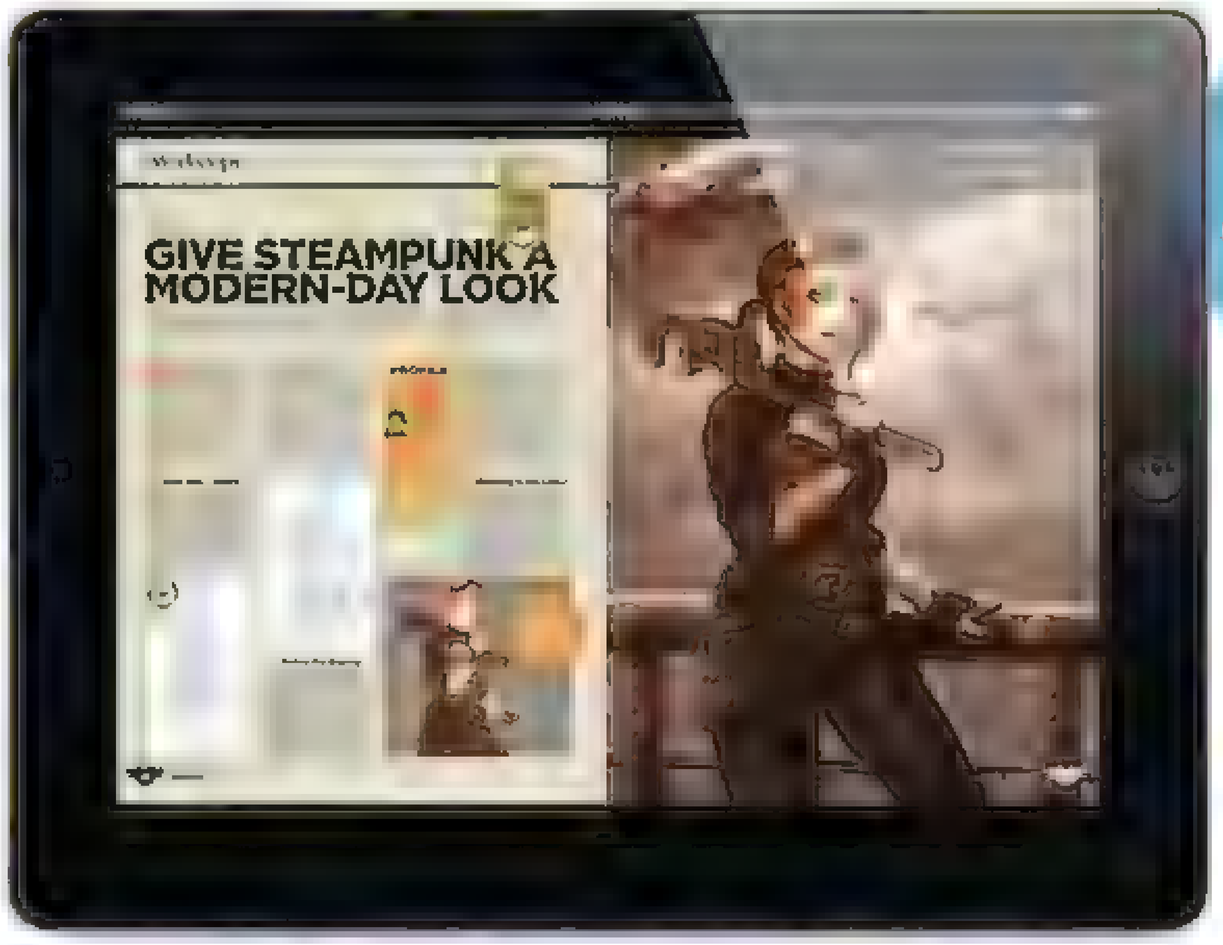
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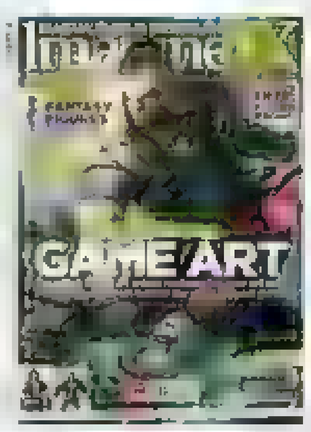
The age-old problem areas of colour and light are tackled head-on this issue, with excellent workshops from Emmanuel Malin, Phrolan Gardner and cover artist Helen Rusovich on the subjects. We also talk to rule-breaking poster boy Simon Goinard and lots, lots more.

Issue 88 November 2012



It's a trip down memory lane this issue as we track down artists behind the Fighting Fantasy gamebooks. Workshops include Francesco Lorenzetti on three-hour speedpainting, Simon Webber on 3D creature concepts, James Gurney on fantasy architecture and more.

Issue 89 December 2012



Our game art special includes some of the world's leading video game artists. There's Remko Troost on Assassin's Creed 3, Hoyjin Ahn reveals Guild Wars 2 techniques and John Park discusses HAWKEN. Epic Games's Shane Pierce explores the art of Gears of War and we visit Ubisoft.

Issue 90 Christmas 2012



In our Blizzard issue, the video game publishers give us the green light to show off new art from Alex Ross, Simon Bisley, Syd Mead, Alex Horley, Paul Bonner, Craig Mullins and other great artists. Sam Didier paints a Warcraft-StarCraft mash-up, and Laurel D Austin composes spiky alien characters.

Issue 91 January 2013



In our Tolkien special we talk to artists John Howe and Alan Lee about making The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey while workshops feature Gollum, Éowyn's battle with the Witch-king and Corrado Vanelli's Middle-earth elf queen. Elsewhere, Donato Giancola shares his treasured techniques.

Issue 92 February 2013



Combine 2D and 3D in your art, improve your backgrounds, mix up your fantasy genres, master backlighting... these are just some of the techniques that you can learn in this month's packed issue. And we talk to Adrian Smith and Edward Howard about their inspirational fantasy art.

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Sketchbook

Ross Setterfield

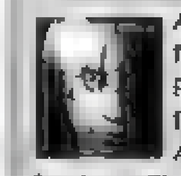
Heroes, villains and great nothing beat all feature in the sketchbook of this English artist





PROFILE

Ross Setterfield
COUNTRY: ENGLAND



An early fascination with fantasy stories meant that Ross was busy drawing from a very young age. After working as a freelance illustrator, Ross is now focusing his attention on fantasy art and would one day like to have the opportunity to tell stories through concept art or book covers.
www.artbyrs.tumblr.com

ELF

"I wanted to draw a character that looked like he was braving the elements. I tried to make it look like he was leaning into the wind."

storemags

Sketchbook Ross Setterfield



TROLL

"This was inspired by John Bauer's paintings... like the contrast between the light character and the dark forest."



DWARVES

"The main reason I like drawing dwarves is that their faces can be very stylised, with oversized noses and furrowed brows particularly like shading noses."



"I prefer vampires to have pointy ears or look monstrous in some way"



VAMPIRE PRINCESS

"I prefer vampires to have pointy ears or look monstrous in some way. This is the least monstrous-looking vampire I have drawn; usually I picture them as hideous bat-creatures."



SPIRIT

"It's some kind of forest spirit. It has skin made of bark and hair made of roots. I tried to picture it rising from the ground."

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Sketchbook

DRAGON:

"It's a heroic dragon. I was pleased with the girl's cloak and the way it contrasts with the dragon's scales."

WOODS WITCH

"She's a witch who lives in the wilds. I made details like her belt, sword hilt and necklace into circular shapes, as if it's the symbol of some ancient religion."

KNIGHT

"I drew this sketch with a Biro. I was trying to see how well I could shade the armour using only a pen."

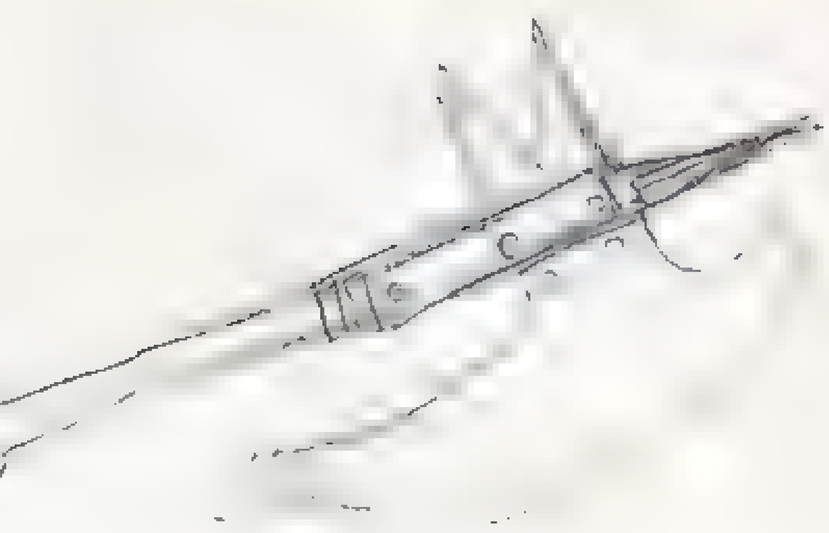
Sketchbook Ross Setterfield



WITCHCRAFT

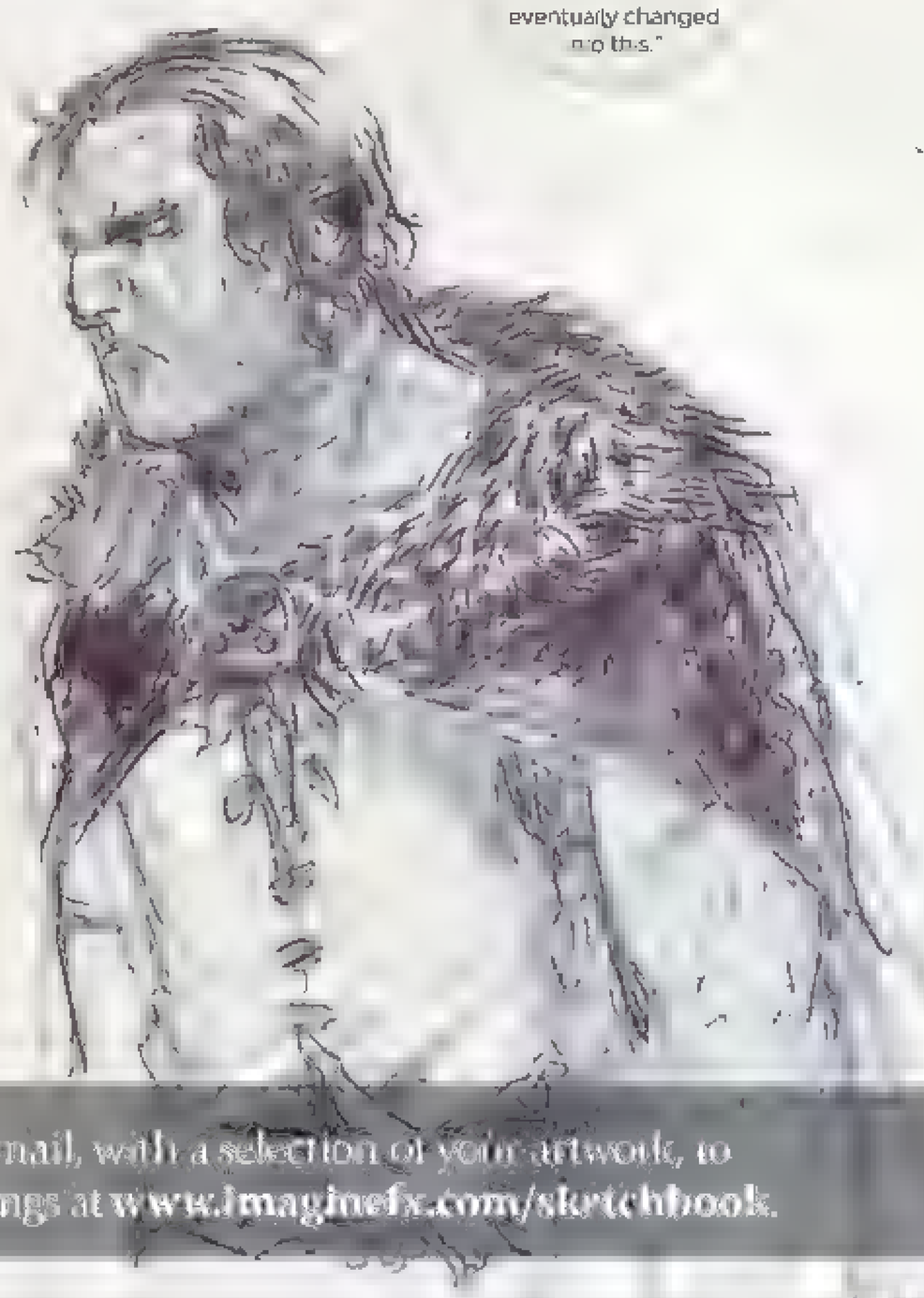
"When I started this sketch, I had no idea where it was going. I think I just started drawing one of the houses and it eventually changed into this."

"When I started this sketch, I had no idea where it was going..."



BARBARIAN

He's a scarred warrior – I drew him after I had read The First Law books by Joe Abercrombie and was inspired to draw a suitably pessimistic grizzled hero."



Want to share your sketches? Then drop us an email, with a selection of your artwork, to **sketchbook@imaginefx.com**, or upload your drawings at **www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook**.

Development sheet

PROJECT TITLE: **THE FIRST MAN**

A character concept for a project that got cancelled at Gameloft's Redsteam studio recently, **Pavel Savchuk's** design was to set the art direction for a whole human faction in the game's universe...

Artist PROFILE

Pavel Savchuk

Country: China



Originally from Kiev, Ukraine, Pavel is currently working as a 3D lead concept artist at Gameloft's Redsteam pre-production studio in Shanghai. "I'm trying to split my time between 2D, 3D and writing music," he says, "but so far my day job is winning outright!"

www.sobaku-chiuchiu.daportfolio.com





Adding a splash

This step is actually done after the final stage, but it's still an important part of the concept development process, so I thought I'd show you here. I'm proposing some alternative colour schemes for the character's texture variations.



Adding an extra dimension

For the next step I produce a rough 3D sketch in ZBrush to paint on top of. Having a basic 3D mesh will make sketching easier and it helps to avoid flat designs that occur when they're modelled.



Final image

You can see where I've added reflective/specular areas. The armour plates are dark, with black glossy memories at the back of which should read as more highly reflective of light. I added a metal texture, but less specular, with little bright chrome parts in the suit joints and in material transition areas.

SEND US YOUR CONCEPTS!

Are you working on a project, or doodling your own development sketches that you'd like to share with us?

LET US KNOW! Email your WIPs and final images to: **develop@imaginefx.com**

Star Wars artist **Terryl Whitlatch** offers a window into creature design, as she shares her methods for creating the Styrah

ANATOMY OF AN ALIEN RACE



What happens when you give sheep the ability to use weapons or to make tools, even create artwork or do visual storytelling of their own? You've established a culture, that's what, and a story, and a history, and a world. From this simple idea, a home planet is designed

In this case it's the planet Amalthea and the continent Ungallah upon which our intelligent, verbal ungulates live. It's rife with wonder, hardship and danger, not only as a result of storms, drought and deadly, cunning predators, but because of an impending invasion too dreadful to be imagined

Nature red in tooth and claw is what the Styrah have accepted and endured for eons. But this new threat on the horizon is out of their ken, and will test them to the limits of existence

A script. A story. A place. Here's where creature design begins...

WHAT IS A STYRAH?



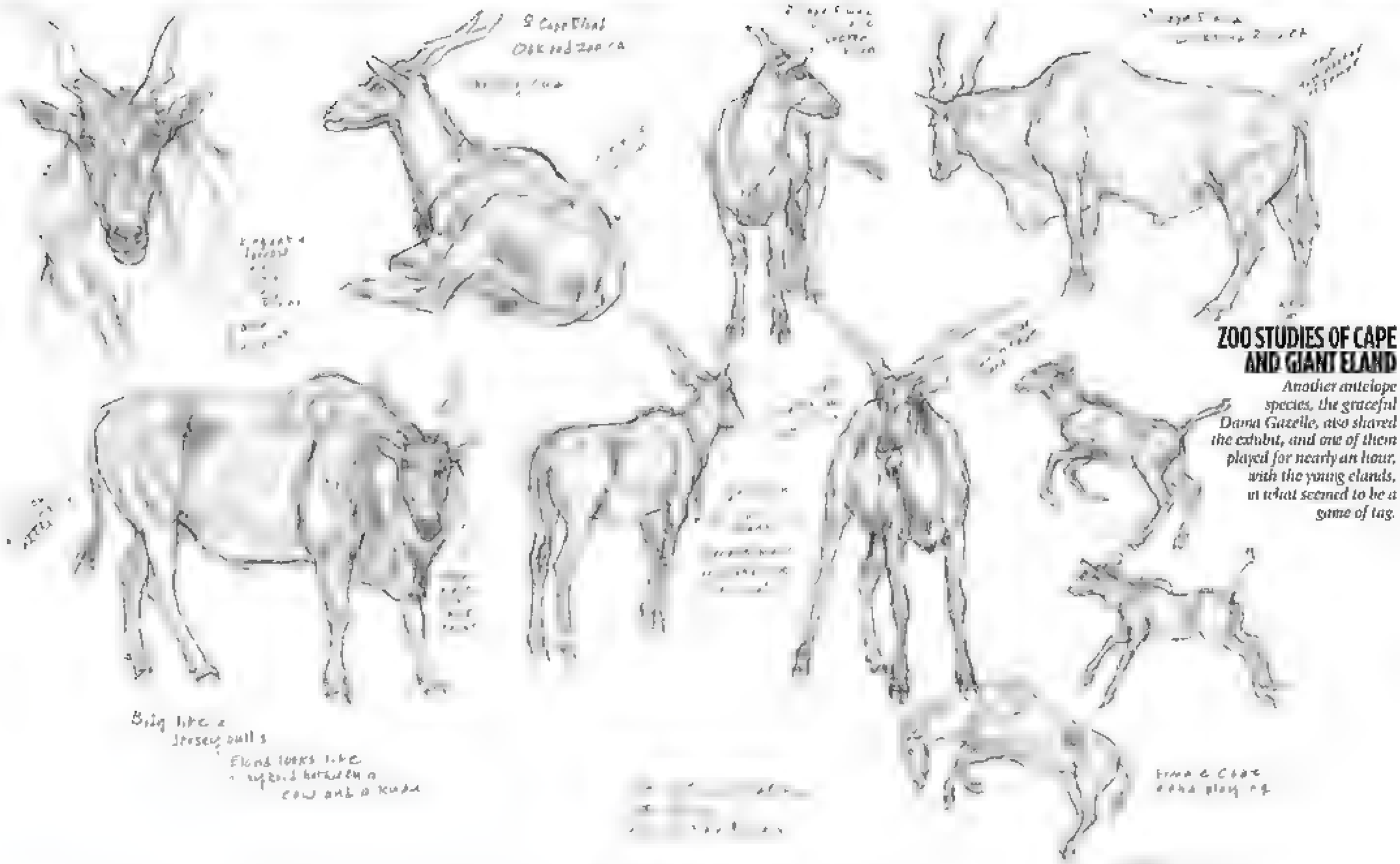
Consider all the elements that make your creature tick — the ability to run vast distances to eat what the land provides, to flee or defend oneself. Plus the ability to create objects that not only aid in all the above but allow the recording – as in art, writing and music – of this and the spiritual ty that ties all such life experiences together. We have a civilisation

We have a time, a place, a history and a culture. We have the 'why' of the creature – what it does. This why establishes the 'what' of the creature – what it looks like to do what it does

For your audience to suspend their disbelief they have to accept that the anatomical design of the animal can reasonably perform what the story or screenplay asks of it. If your creature looks cool with lots of bells and whistles there'd better be a reason for this. Otherwise it only exist in a fairy and or Dr Seuss universe

And there's one more thing. Adding more horns, spiny protrusions, or heads and eyeballs than necessary won't make your creature better, but rather harder to read on the big screen. As George Lucas once said, 'If you can't read a design in a nanosecond, then it's a bad design'

Animal footprints © www.istockphoto.com/ bulentgurler



DESIGN AN ELLANDORAN STYRAH

Ma'hah is the true essence of warrior. He's brave, brash and the leader of his own cadre made up of the best warriors from a variety of different Styrah species, each with their own special talents.

He is the essence of strength, confidence and is altogether magnificent, with his upright carriage, massive corkscrewing horns and the triangular cross cones that enhance his brows. His head and neck are hammered with a noble aquiline facial profile. Picture him as he strides along, half-facing his spear, his long tail swaying gracefully after him. Needless to say, all the female Ellandorans gasp and gush.



VISUALISE THE DESIGN

Go to the source of all creature design. Mother Nature herself. You can't do better than this. Drawing animals, portraying them accurately, seeking to understand both their anatomy and behaviour as much as possible is essential to creature design and must be the main preoccupation of a creature designer. Without this foundation you'll never be able to fly.

Sketching real animals helps to wrap your brain around anatomy, animal perspectives and visual settings once you get back to your studio. In addition, being able to study how the animals move and behave gives insight into your character's personality.

I love to draw hoofed mammals and so took myself to the zoo and sketched the largest of the antelope species, the Eland. There are two closely related species, the Cape Eland and the Giant Eland. They're both really large, especially the bulls, which in the case of the giant eland, stand six feet at the shoulder and taller than an African Cape Buffalo. Put this animal on its hind legs, and it is about 12 feet tall. Just add a long tail behind it, and you've got the start of a pretty good Styrah.

After spending time with the elands I could picture Ma'hah pausing in mid-stride and looking at me, his ears flicking back and forth, and his nostrils flaring to catch the slightest scent. Even the quiver of his hide should an insect land upon him.

ANIMAL INTELLIGENCE

You may not realise how intelligent the hoofed mammals are. A lot of expression is in the glint of an eye, the curl of the lip, the pattern of the ear and the posture of the body. Indeed, the ungulates, or hoofed mammals, have a sophisticated gesture language in addition to the many different sounds they make.

WATCH AND LEARN

Animals are always watching something, or subtly communicating with their fellows. Two of the females have recently had calves. It was lovely to see the calves galloping and bucking like foals. It's a wonderful thing to see such large animals so swift and nimble.

INTERPRET PERSONALITY

These observations really helped me get into [illegible] but with character quirks that would reveal themselves during the course of the adventure. Hand-in-hand with anatomy, personality is the second linkend in creature design.

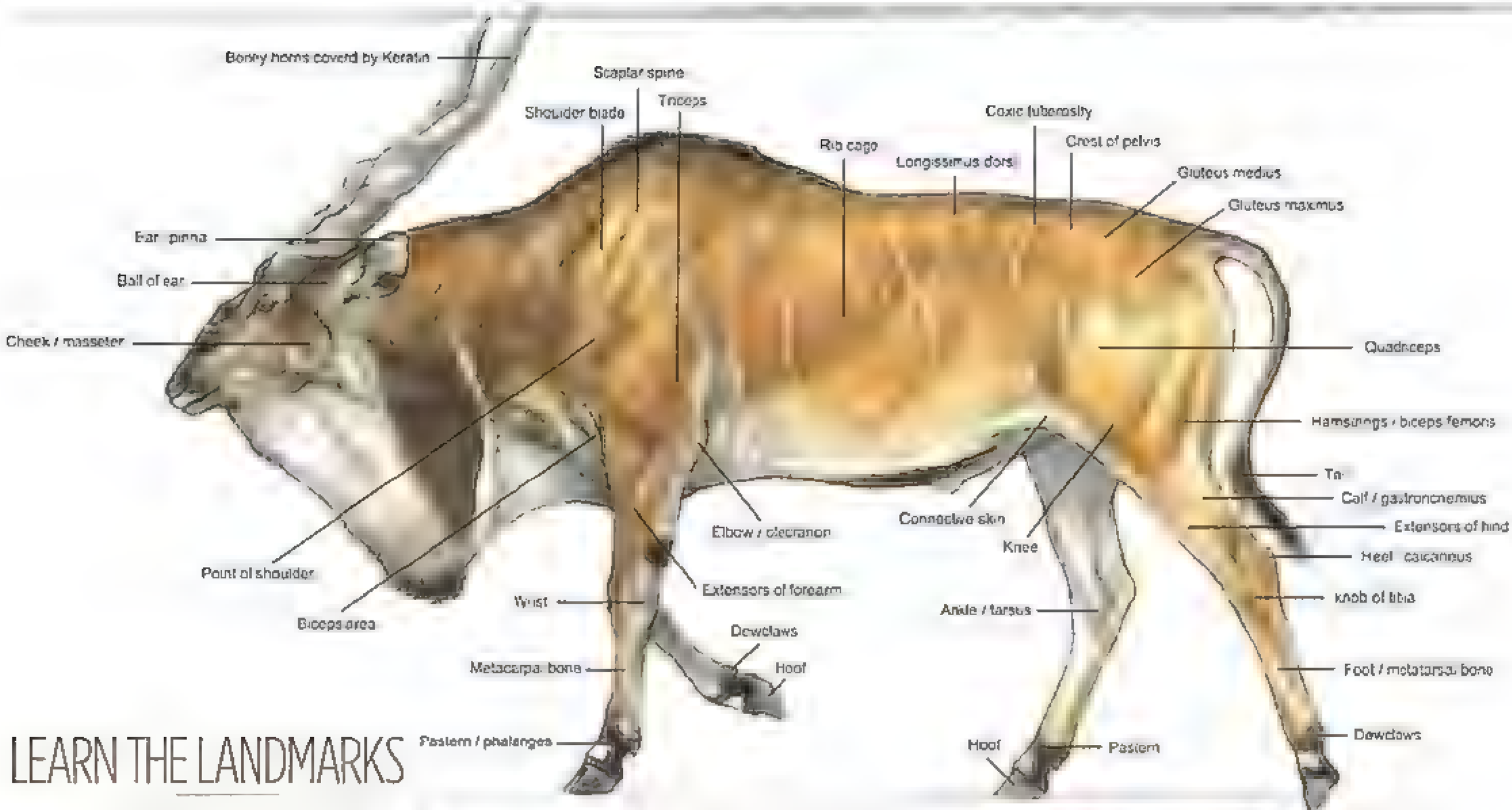
DRAWING ANATOMY

After I sketched the eland, I then did a formal study of a full-grown eland, drawing not only the surface anatomy, but also the general musculature, and skeleton. Even though the Styrah walk and run on their hind legs, these natural history studies would prove invaluable to me in the realisation of their anatomical design.

STUDY THE SURFACE

Look at the surface of the animal, such that you would see nothing in front of you at the zoo. You can see that many of these anatomical forms are visible on the surface, even when covered by muscle, fat, skin and fur.

→



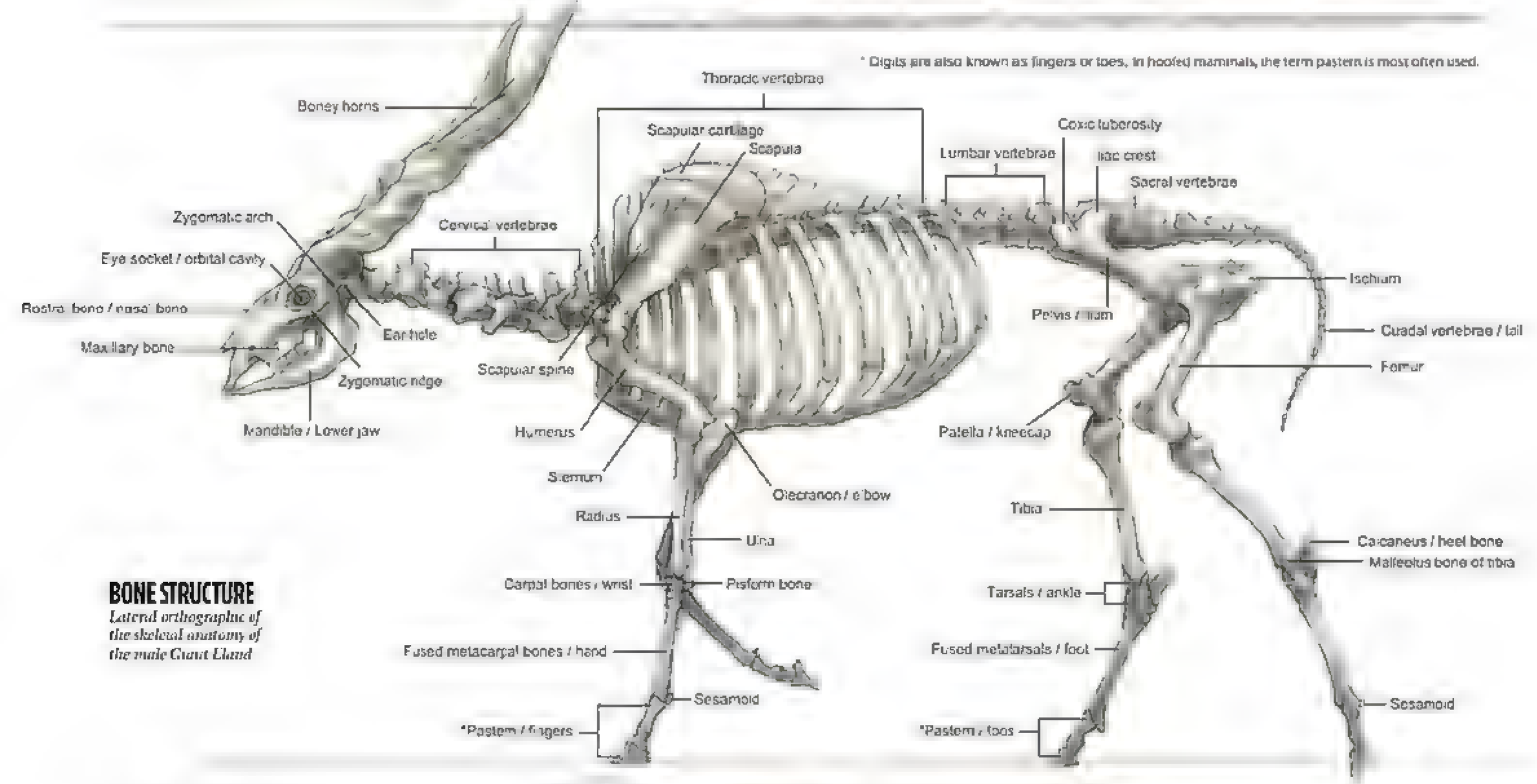
LEARN THE LANDMARKS

ve abe ed the landmarks of the underlying anatomy v sib e to the cons stent throughout all hoofed mammals, and indeed across the board to a greater or esser extent, to al tetrapods

SKIN TONE
Lateral othographic of the surface anatomy of the male Giant Eland.

(vertebrates excluding f sh). Work on memor sing these c oes (if you regu ar y do fam liar with these anatom cal points). Note that what we ca l the knees of an ante ope are rea y its wrists, and that the true knee

(which horsemen ca the stifle) is tucked up on the hind leg close to the abdomen same as in a human being, w th the notab e except on of the lack of co arbones Knowing this makes th ngs easier



BONE STRUCTURE
Lateral orthographic of the skeletal anatomy of the male Giant Eland

THE SKELETON

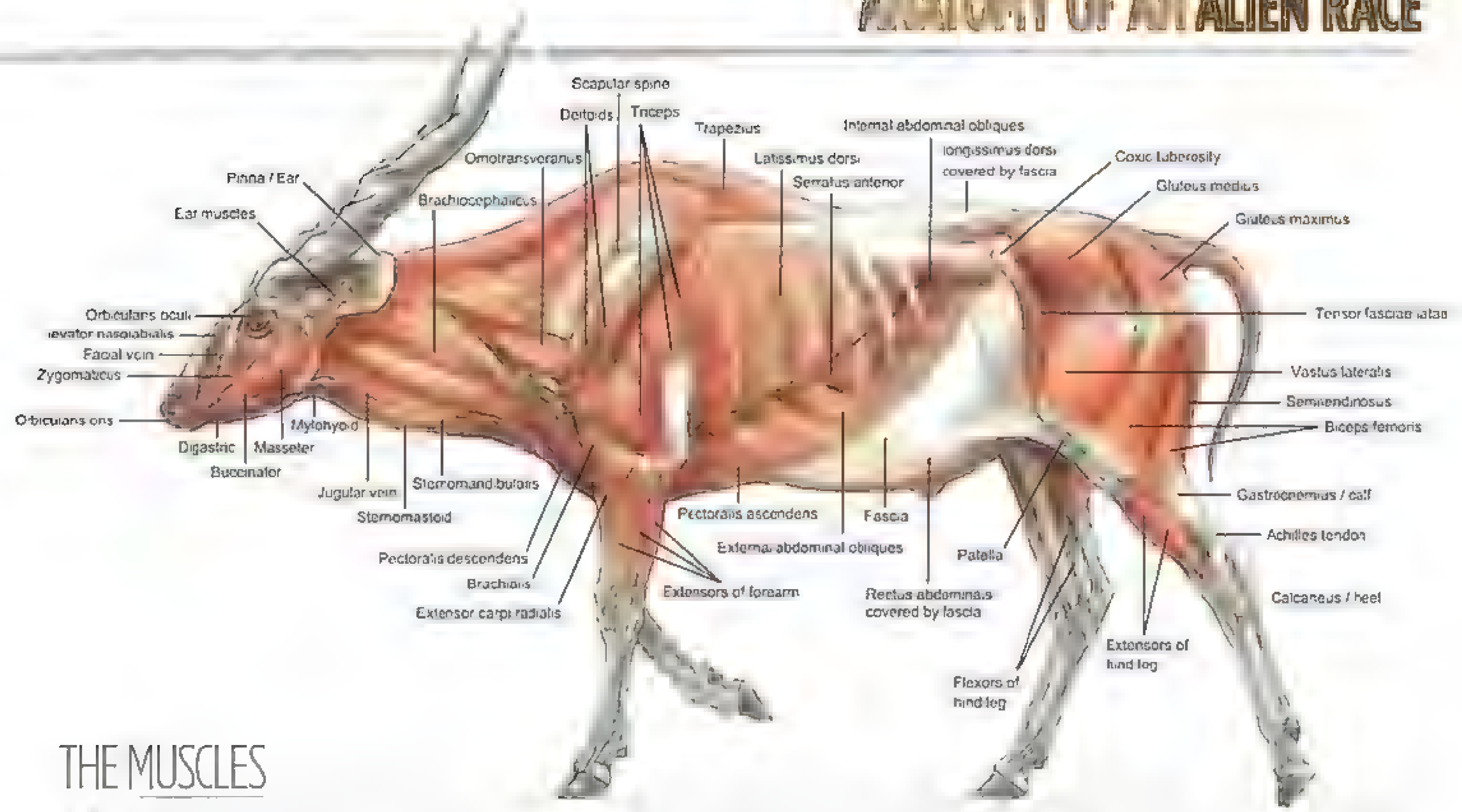
The skeleton is the frame on wh ch the from w ch the ttle muscles and inte na ms are suspended f you're a CG an meto th s s the an mal s rg Move the h nges and vectors formed by the o nts and bones, and you move the anima

ADAPTING THE SKELETON

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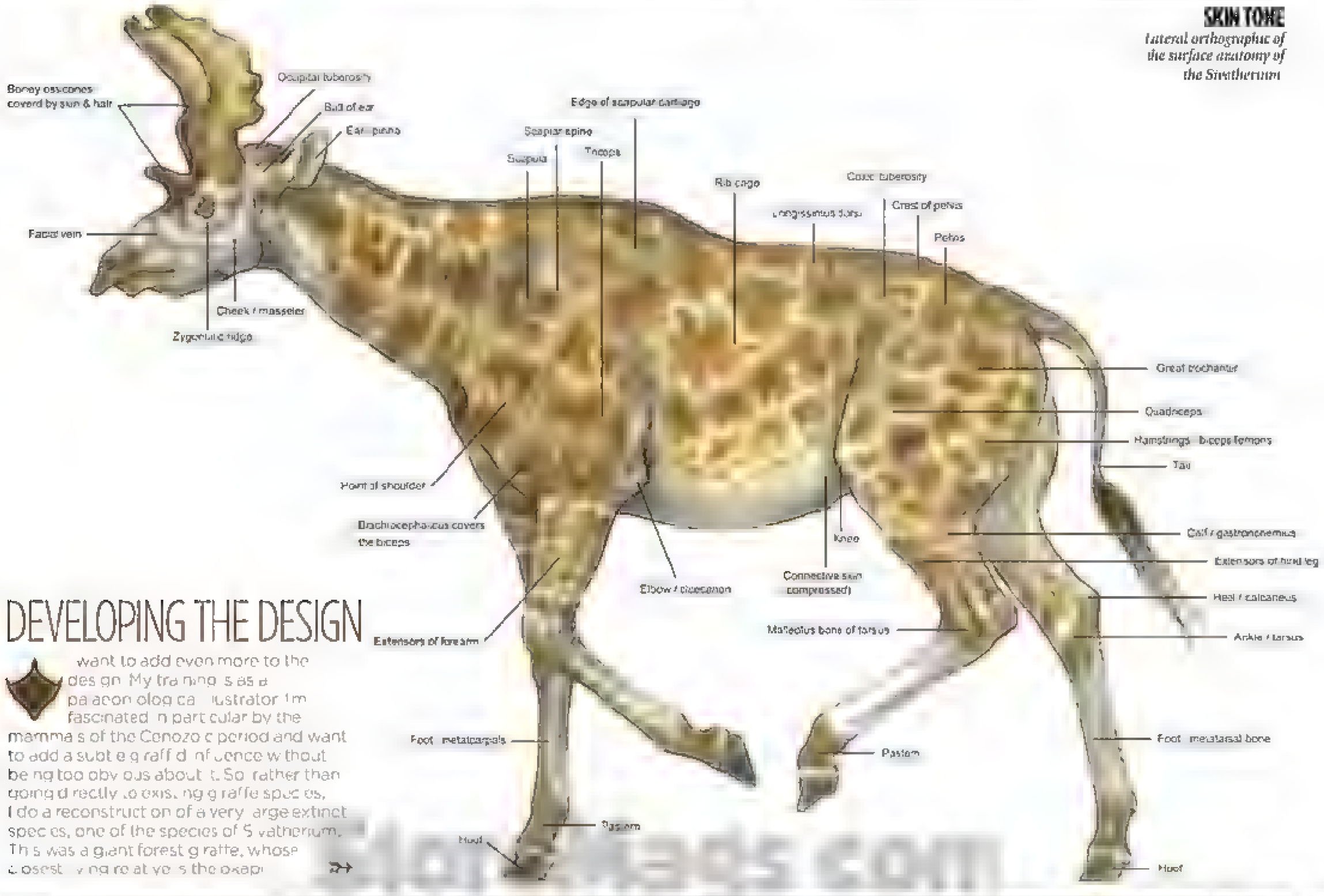
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co arbones Two mm musc arach cephal c s and the Sternomand b la s, descend from beh nd the ow, and uninterrupted by co a bon ser the at y nto the inner e bow ar



MUSCULAR VIEW
Lateral orthographic of the muscular anatomy of the male Giant Eland.

SKIN TONE
Lateral orthographic of the surface anatomy of the Smetherium



THE MUSCLES

Finally we come to the muscles. Again, we share these same muscles with the Eland – it's just that they are adapted to conform to the [illegible] can see how so much of the skeleton and muscular form is evident on the surface. This then is the template for what will become the anatomy of Mahah [illegible] areas and tendons, are fascial tissue that overlays and encapsulates muscles, protecting them and preventing intermuscular friction. The thicker it is, the

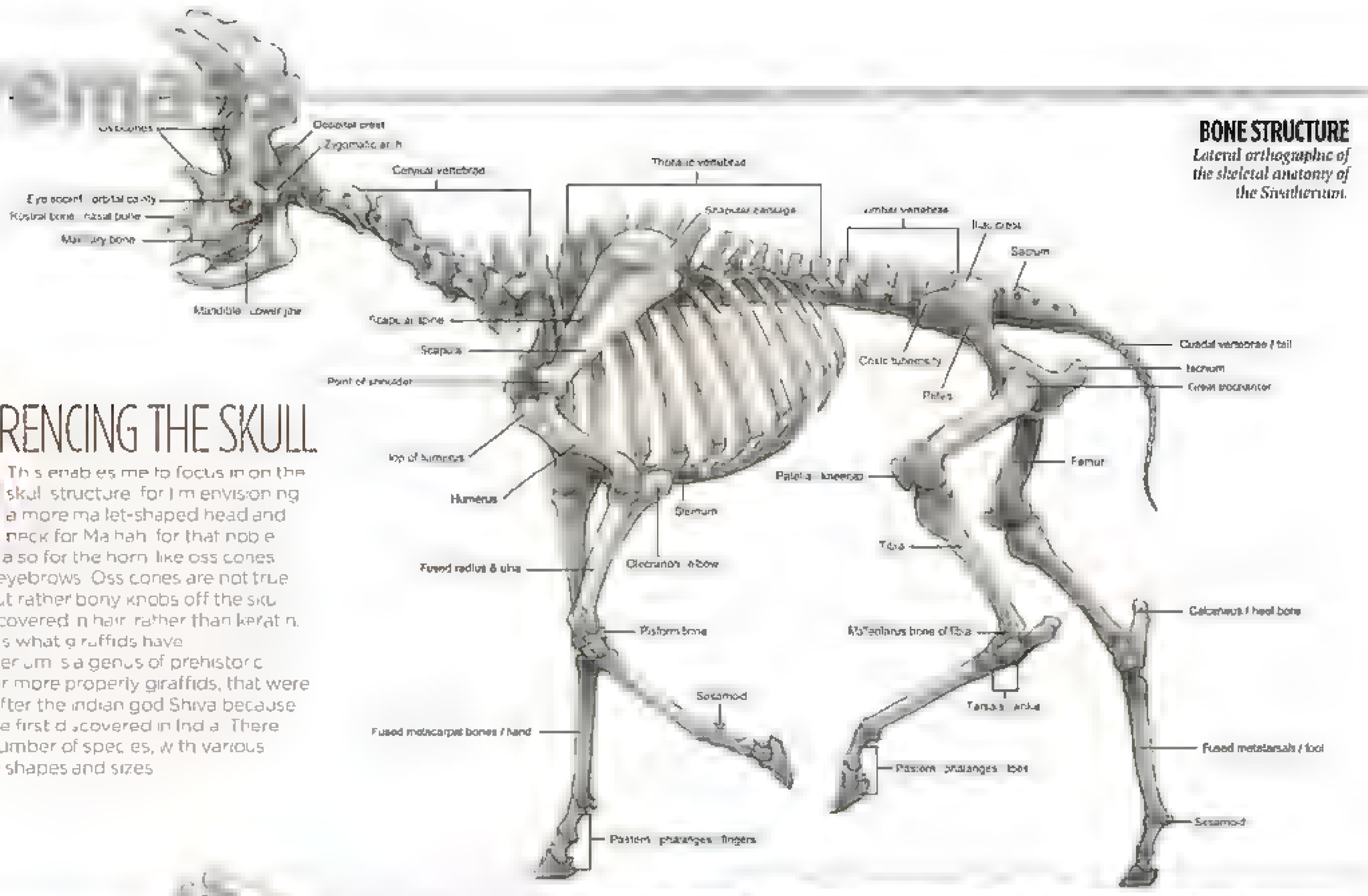
DEVELOPING THE DESIGN

I want to add even more to the design. My training as a palaeontological illustrator, I'm fascinated in particular by the mammals of the Cenozoic period and want to add a subtle giraffid influence without being too obvious about it. So rather than going directly to existing giraffe species, I do a reconstruction of a very large extinct species, one of the species of Sivatherium. This was a giant forest giraffe, whose closest living relatives are the okapi

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BONE STRUCTURE

Lateral orthographic of the skeletal anatomy of the Sivatherium.



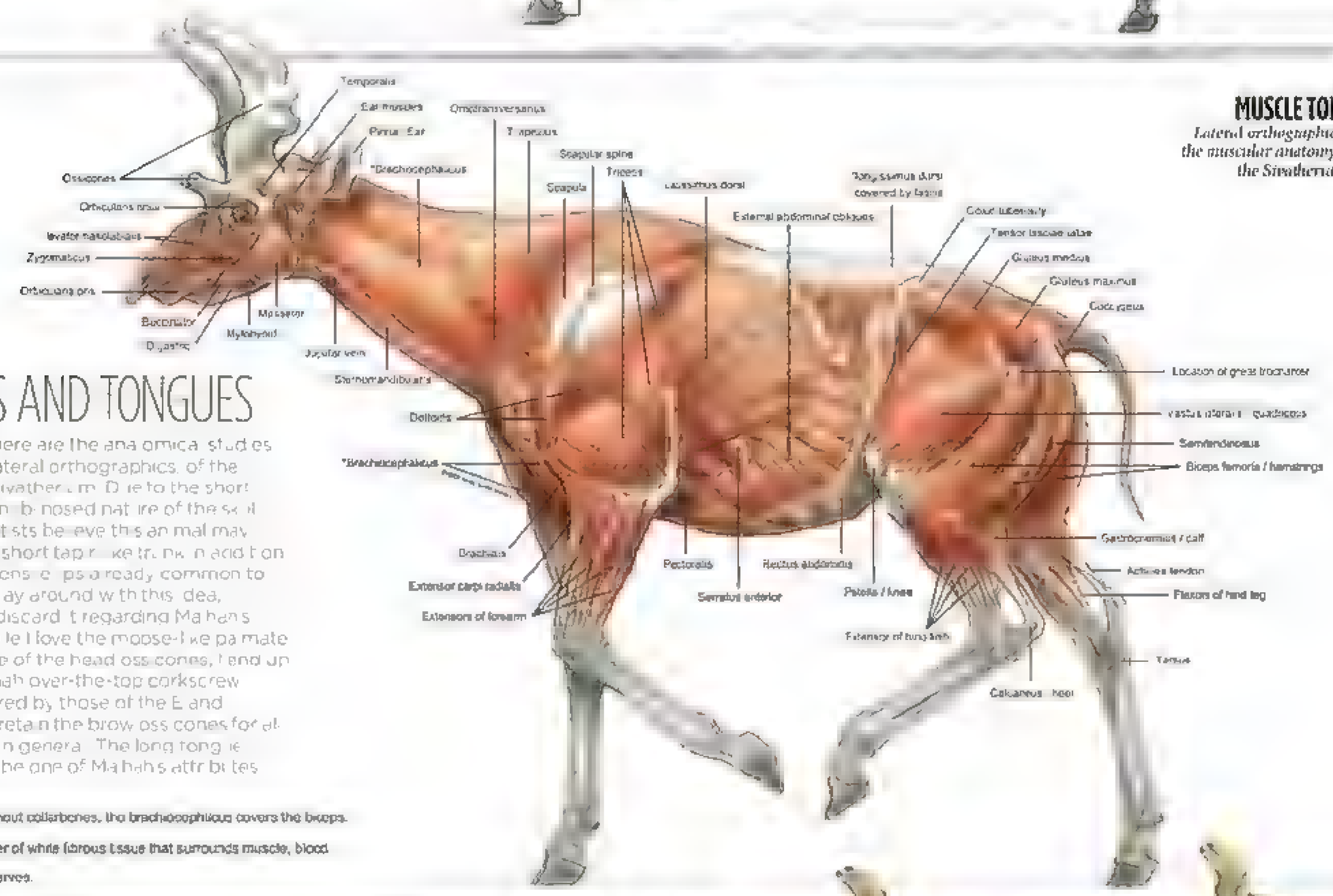
REFERENCING THE SKULL

This enables me to focus in on the skull structure for I'm envisioning a more mallet-shaped head and neck for Mahah for that noble feel and also for the horn like oss cones over his eyebrows. Oss cones are not true horns, but rather bony knobs off the skull that are covered in hair rather than keratin, and this is what giraffids have.

Sivatherium is a genus of prehistoric giraffe, or more properly giraffids, that were named after the Indian god Shiva because they were first discovered in India. There were a number of species, with various oss cone shapes and sizes.

MUSCLE TONE

Lateral orthographic of the muscular anatomy of the Sivatherium.



NECKS AND TONGUES

Here are the anatomical studies (lateral orthographics) of the Sivatherium. Due to the short, snub-nosed nature of the skull some scientists believe this animal may have had a short, taper-like trunk. In addition to the prehensile lips already common to giraffes. I play around with this idea, although I discard it regarding Mahan's design. While I love the moose-like palmate architecture of the head oss cones, I end up giving Mahah over-the-top corkscrew horns, inspired by those of the Eland. However, I retain the brow oss cones for all the Styrahcin genera. The long tongue would also be one of Mahah's attributes.

* In animals without collarbones, the brachiocephalicus covers the biceps.

* Fascia: A layer of white fibrous tissue that surrounds muscle, blood vessels and nerves.

UNDERSTAND YOUR ANIMALS

START DRAWING MA'HAH

GESTURAL STUDIES

and were going and beyond. I'm not going to be perfect at this point anymore than I was trying to be when I was sketching. But I'm learning. I learn this character that

MA'HAH IN ACTION

Thumbnails of Ma'hah doing training exercises. I imagine him a Roman soldier or gladiator, both at rest and working out.





SKIN TONE

Lateral orthographic of the surface anatomy of the male Lilandaran Siyrah.

IN THE SCENE

Then go on to do some little scenes from the story. Even though Ma'hah is one huge animal, there are animals even larger than he is. The upper animal is a Rhodan-descendant, very related to the Siyrah, and the lower animal is another relative called the Ibov.

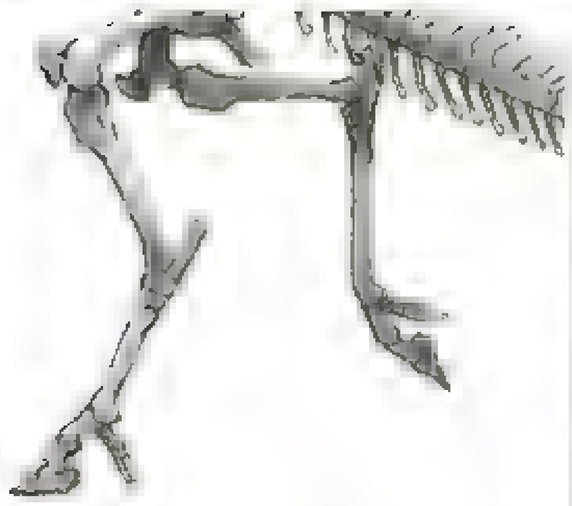


SCENE SKETCHES

Working out the various story elements

FLESH HIM OUT

So here he is striding about. This isn't a photographic, but rather an action pose. There is more movement and motion and it informs how gravity is acting upon the muscles to create a flash



SKELETON LANDMARKS

Label the landmark anatomical points. Mahah shares all of these with his Earthly cousins the eland and Sivatherium. Where he differs the most is in the forelimbs, which are reminiscent in their proportions of those of red kangaroos. This is so they can better handle and carry objects. The hands as mentioned earlier are derived from the basic cloven hoof structure and the dewclaws afford double opposability.

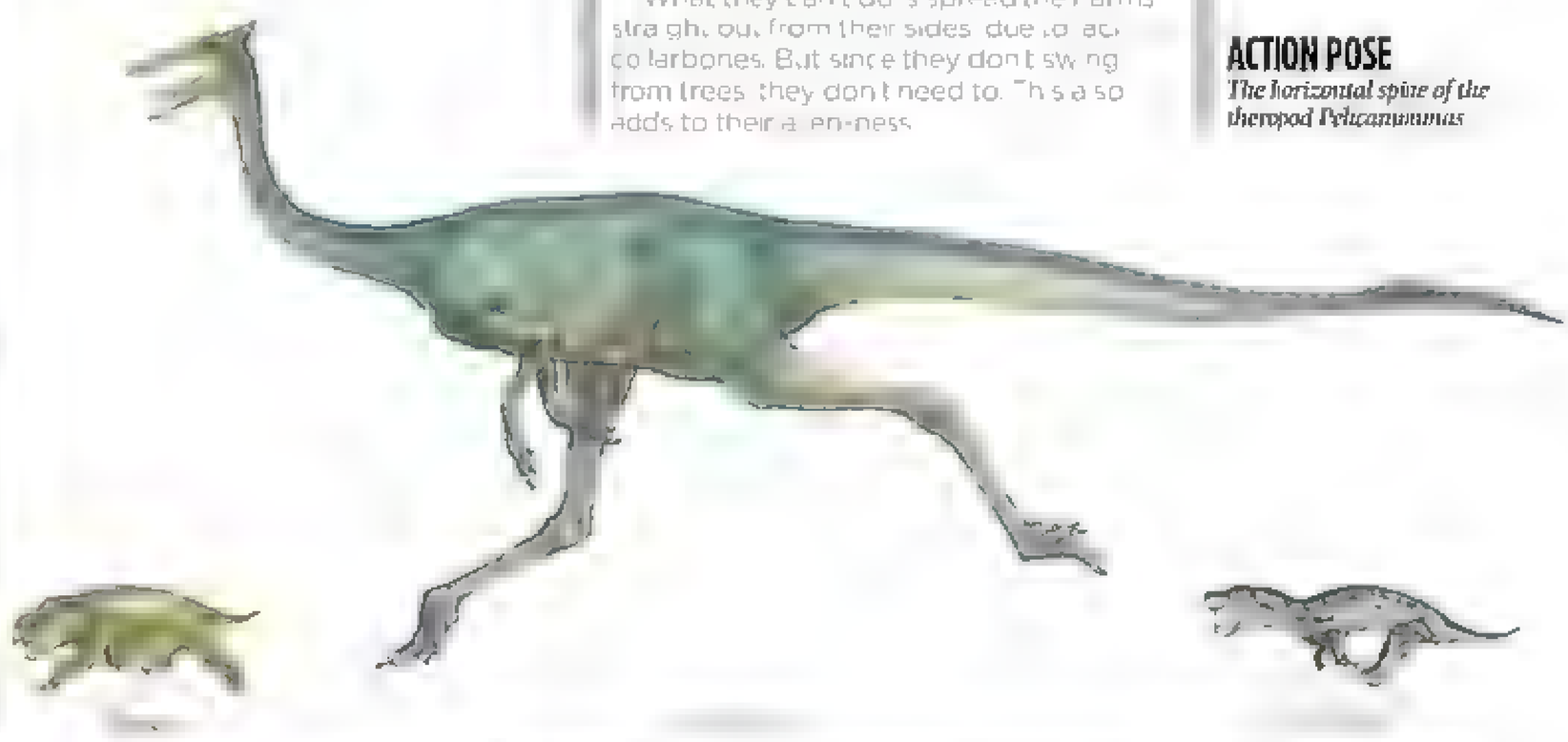
The dewclaws of the hind hooves are also much longer than in the Eland since the Styrah is so much heavier. These help to stabilise the foot in uneven terrain or in muddy areas. You can see this in a marsh antelope called the Sitatunga.

CONSIDER THE POSTURE

The other thing you will notice is that Mahah's sway-backed. Unlike the relatively straight backs of the Eland and Sivatherium. This is because we as this default posture is an upright one.

Mankind is the only vertebrate species whose default position is upright. Even the anthropoid apes usually prefer to walk on all fours, and their convex hunched backbones show that it's the S-curve that allows this to be possible in us, and the same is true for the Styrah. This posture enables the Styrah to keep their forelimbs free to carry objects, and to reach upward as high as possible — just like us.

What they can't do is spread their arms straight out from their sides due to their collarbones. But since they don't swing from trees, they don't need to. This also adds to their alien-ness.



ACTION POSE
The horizontal spine of the theropod Pelecanimimus



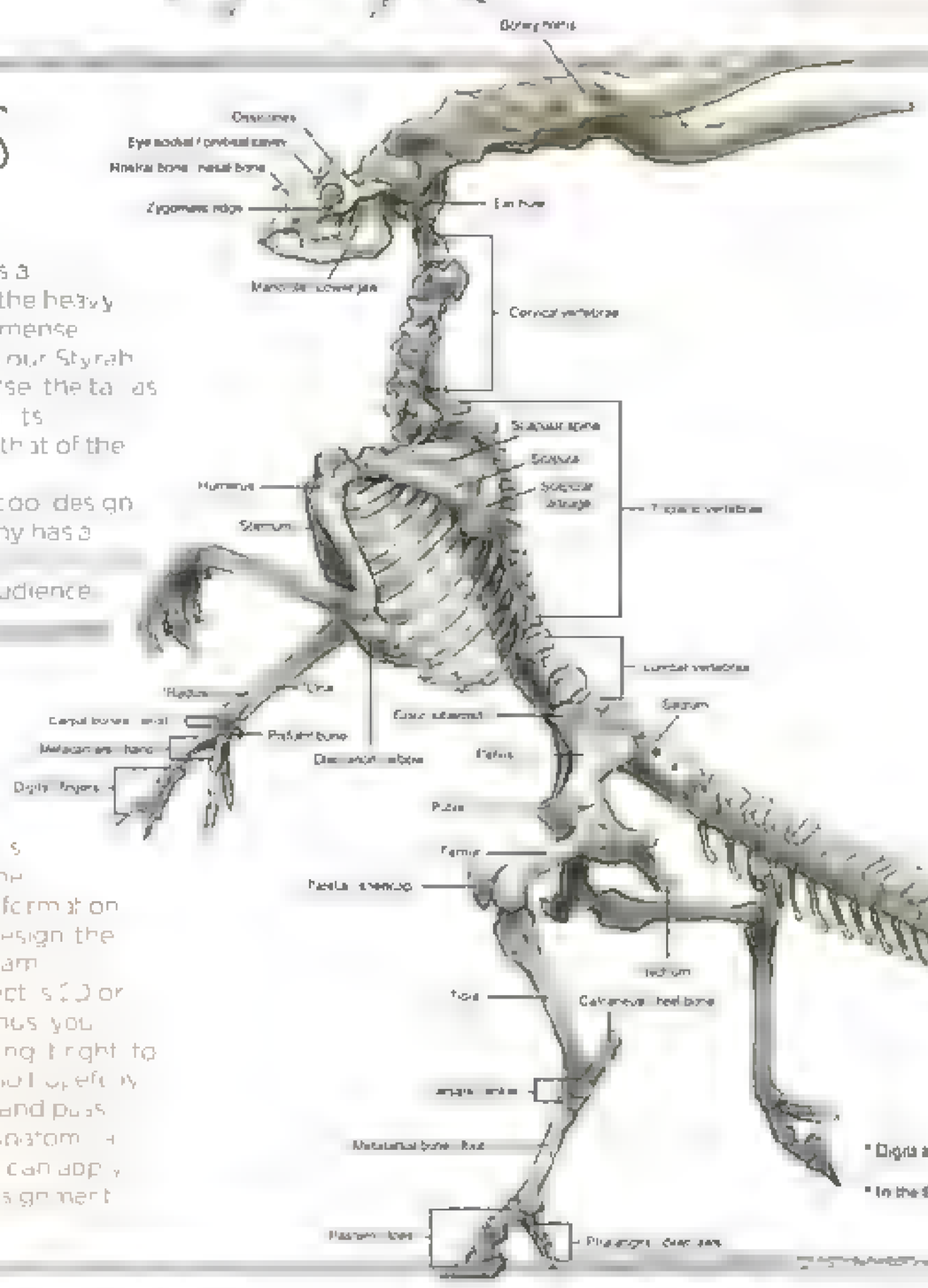
CREATURE EVOLUTION

While other animals such as birds and theropod dinosaurs such as the Pelecanimimus walk on their hind legs, you'll note that they are not upright. Their spines are horizontal to the ground. You can see that in this illustration. Also here is a sketch showing the progression of design influence from the Eland and Sivatherium to the Blanc or an Styrah. See how the addition of the ornaments creates a counterbalance that prevents a

EVERYTHING HAS A REASON

The ornaments acts as a counterbalance to the heavy head, chest and immense horns. Without this your Styrah would fall forward. And of course the tail as a weapon is important to them. Its musculature is borrowed from that of the Pelecanimimus dinosaur.

So hopefully I've created a cool design. But every aspect of the anatomy has a reason for being there, with the creature seem real to the audience.



SKELETON INFORMATION

Here's the labelled skeleton — this is what the riggers will use as their guide. The rig is the internal digital skeleton or framework that supports and is used to move a CG character. In reality, it looks like a complicated structure of vectors, squares and other polygons, but you can still see the essence of the natural skeleton there.

For a natural-looking creature a natural-looking skeleton will additionally be created to enfold the bare rig, with another layer for muscles and finally the skin, with fur and texture mapping. Quite a complex marionette, but it all comes down to solid anatomy which enables the creature to move in a believable manner.

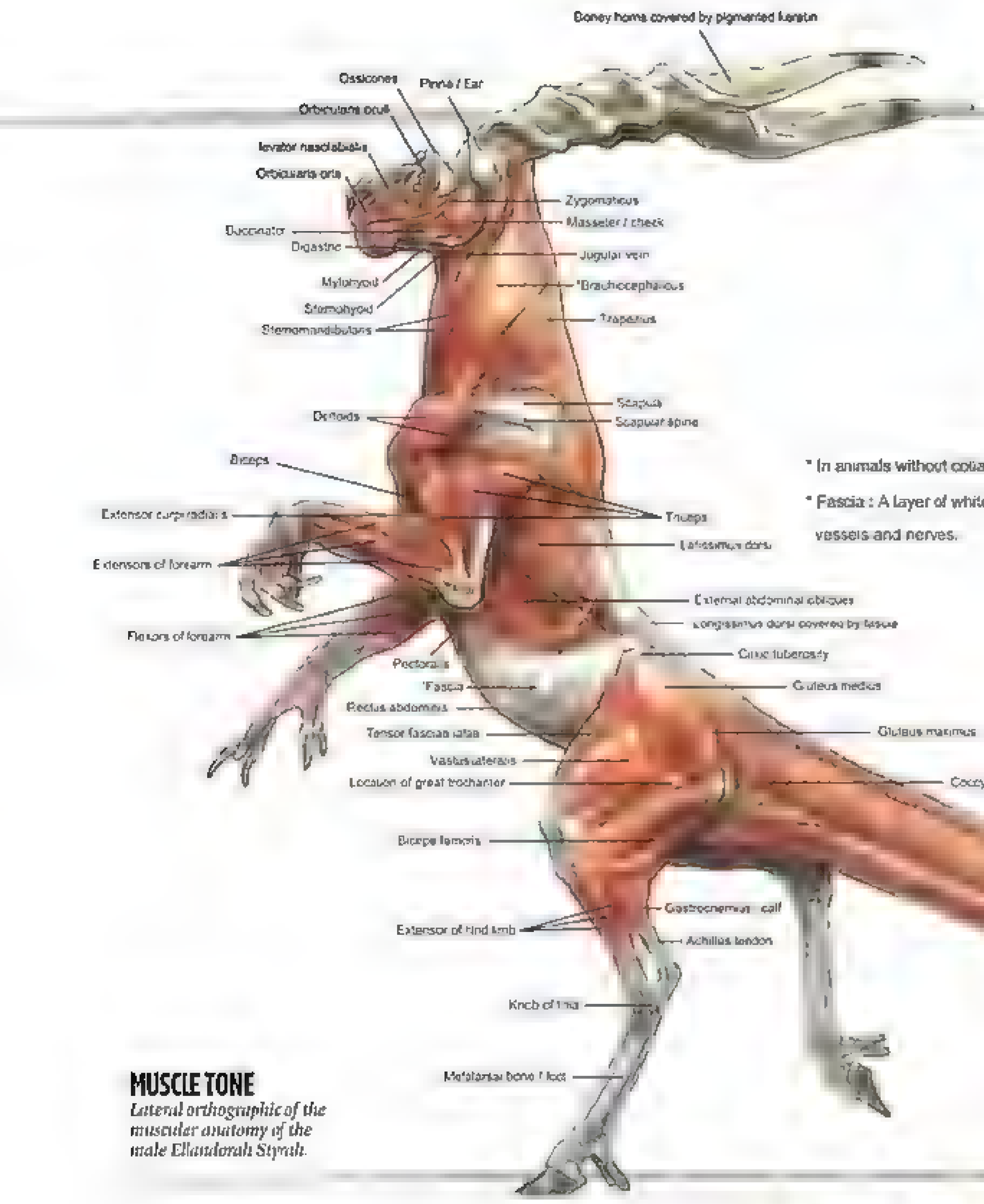
SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE

Anatomical knowledge is crucial in production. The more pre-production information you can put into the design the easier it is for the production team regardless of whether the project is 2D or 3D to animate the character. Thus you minimise the time spent getting it right to the delight of the producer. You'll be left with a design you can for future jobs and pass your name around. With each anatomy job you do you'll learn more and can apply this information into your next assignment.

BONE STRUCTURE
Lateral orthographic of the skeletal anatomy of the male Ellandoran Styrah.

* Digits are also known as fingers or toes. In hoofed mammals, the term pastern is most often used.

* In the Ellandoran and all styrah, the radius ulna are semi-fused to allow for forearm rotation.



MUSCLE TONE
Lateral orthographic of the muscular anatomy of the male Elladorah Styrah.

MUSCLE DETAILS

Lastly, here is the musculature which rounds out the creature and is so necessary for bringing it to life. The white areas on the flank and shoulder blade are fibrous tissues called fascia which cover some of the deeper muscles and/or bones and protect them. Other white areas are bones and tendons, and in the case of the ear cartilage. Muscles are red due to the large amount of blood in them. In the living animal they are plump and supple, due to the fluid of the blood serum, lymph and plasma.

* In animals without collarbones, the brachiocephalicus covers the biceps.

* Fascia : A layer of white fibrous tissue that surrounds muscle, blood vessels and nerves.



EXPRESSION SHEETS

What to do next? Model and expression sheets! These show the character performing typical actions and behaviours required in the story. They are also essential in showing how the anatomy is affected and appears in these various poses. These, along with the anatomical studies and orthos are vital to the CG modellers and animators for accuracy and inspiration.



MAHAH IN MOTION
Here is Mahah hitting towards us, spear in hand. We can see his underbelly and the tops of his hooves, how his bones are working, how foreshortening affects everything.

MAHAH IN CONTEXT
I've included some of the other Styrah characters, a spear-horned Onzeah and a pair of small Tizzeah. Oh yes, and some horned rodent thingies. Ingellah has a lot of horned creatures, many of them are not Styrah. It must be something in the water.

COLOURING THE DESIGNS

These were painted using Copic Sketch Markers. Clean, odourless and efficient, they handle the transition from pen and ink work to digital painting and allow for a limitless array of vibrant colours. I get inspiration from nature. African animals tend to be covered with beautiful, complex and dazzling patterns, and I'm a big fan of African design.

[illegible] masks. Stripes and spots abound in [illegible]. There's something very [illegible] about the face of the Gemsbok. Or [illegible] in particular. There are wrist stripes and breast eye stripes, rump patch. The Ronchoe Antelope. A lot of the inspiration, colour patterns for Mahah and the [illegible] elements [illegible] Roman [illegible].

FINAL THOUGHTS

TALES OF AMALTHEA

I have by no means exhausted the illustrations produced in designing Mahah and his world. The possibilities were and are, endless. However, there is a way you can find out more. Visit **www.talesofamalthea.com** for Mahah's continuing story and for practical, cut-to-the-chase creature design and anatomy. There I'll be glad and excited to share what I know, and am continuing to learn, regarding this fascinating, feline and timely subject. It's the love of real animals that's the underpinning of all creature design.

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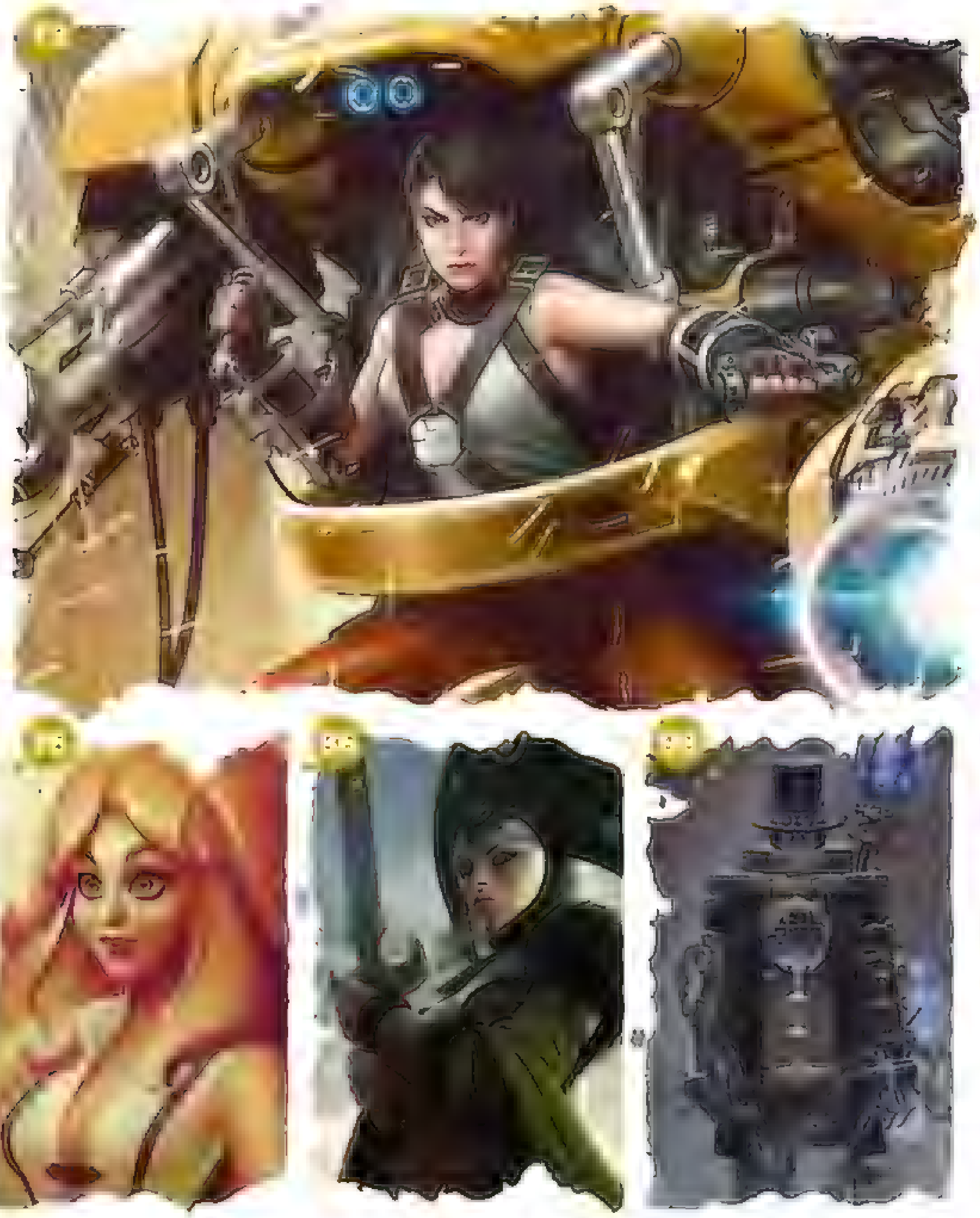
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Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

Ground your art in the real world
Admira Wijaya paints a robot suit with a foot in the present and one in the future.

Reimagine a sci-fi comic character
Space heroine Barbarella is given a more cartoony look, by Serge Birault.

Adopt a fresh creative process
Nick Harris reveals all you need to know to use SketchBook Pro

Customise your brushes in SAI
Paco Rico Torres on custom brushes and favourite tools.

Depict a unique facial expression
Max Kostenko gives a character a fresh expression.

Introduce key story elements
René Milot uses traditional tricks to hint at more.

Update a classic fantasy beast
Stefan Kopinski places a steampunk minotaur in an evocative environment.

Paint a macabre steampunk figure
Clint Cearley makes the most of a cold colour palette..

Workshops

GROUND YOUR ART IN THE REAL WORLD

Admira Wijaya designs a robotic suit that has one oversized foot in the sci-fi world of the future, with the other firmly placed in the here and now

Artist PROFILE



Founder of

Career as a visualiser

Industry before working with Imaginary Friends

What is it about robots that fascinates people? Is it our tendency to be in constant need of provisional help? Are we that desperate that we (well, some of us anyway) are trying hard to make robots that look like us? Maybe one day they'll do all our dirty work!

In any case, I think our fascination lies in the fact that its currently limitless possibilities. We're currently restricted by mechanical plausibility, but take that out of our equation and what we get is pure science fiction. That, in essence, is the beauty of its fantasy, now plausible in the near future. Exciting, isn't it! Thus, go wild with your imagination.

One such technology is a mech, such as the one I'm about to show you. It's a robotic device designed to extend the reach, strength and speed of the driver. The objective here is to paint a rescue mech from, say, the 31st century. The task is more than mere painting; it's also to visualise plausibility. Without it, it's like talking technobabble but trying to sound like Data (Star Trek: TNG fans everybody will know that you're just talking gibberish!).

Painting techniques vary from artist to artist, and it doesn't matter, really, do what you like. I always take extra caution with my ideas. Keep doodling and sketching, study engines and your surroundings. All this is to maximise your results in reaching a level of plausibility. After all, you can't be a science fiction artist without knowing a little bit about science. Acknowledged!



1 From the rough

I usually start every artwork from greyscale shapes, no lines. If there are some lines within the frame, they're only there to make certain things look obvious. First I quickly sketch a standing pose to get some design ideas from here. I make seven alternatives greyscale sketch variants. They don't have to be precise or neat because I'm just looking for inspiration.

2 Choose a direction

Now I have to decide between which of the rough sketches has a better composition to take forward. I decide to go with my third sketch. To get the greyscale sketch, I only use Photoshop's default brushes. Before I take any further steps, I make a number of custom brushes to maximise my efficiency.

3 Begin greyscaling

I set up the layers in three parts: foreground, subject(s) and background. With the subject, I start from the easiest areas to shade. I try to use as few layers as possible. This is useful, especially for low-spec computers. I like to do it from top to bottom because sometimes the bottom parts will be covered by effects.



PRO SECRETS

Be thorough in your approach

Be sure to finish each step before moving on.

Things, it will be too difficult to go back and fix them again.

4 Work over the concept

I'm still working in greyscale. I add parts that weren't drawn in the sketch earlier, such as cables and smaller machine parts. By adding more complexities, the greyscale will start to look very different from the initial sketch. I add lights and shadows, but not too much because I still need to visualise its 3D shape.

5 Detailing the pilot

Here's where the excitement starts. I love this step because I can pour all my wildest imaginations into the drawing. It may take a lot of time – due to the large amount of small parts to be drawn. I take special care with the lady's expression to maximise the overall impact because despite being small in size she's the viewer's first impression. I use a customised Soft Round brush with added Texture Opacity to achieve my desired look. I don't mean to get carried away though because there are a lot of other parts that need to be done.



6 Create the environment

After I complete the subject's detailed shading, I move on to the line's layout on the foreground and background layers using a custom Bristle brush. As I begin detailing, the use of perspective becomes important because nobody can imagine one line path each any degree of perspective. I don't think too much about the background just yet.



7 Building the background

Now I start to think of the background. The first step is to draw the layout keeping in mind the perspective of the subject. To shorten the process, I limit my process to silhouettes first and then add other objects to enrich the background.

8 Use of line art

I use a little bit of line art to help me develop my desired shapes. To achieve a sense of depth, I use two to three layers above the background layer, adding details to each layer – such as shading, lighting, textures and atmosphere. I use mainly the 2B Pencil, a Soft Round and a Bristle brush. I don't put too much detail on the background, because its only purpose is to emphasise the space around the subject.





9 Adding environmental detail

I put aside the two layer fire layouts I made earlier and rename them 'Fire back layout' and 'Fire front layout' to avoid confusion. I add more leaves in another layer using a Hard Round brush to bring the scene to life.



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

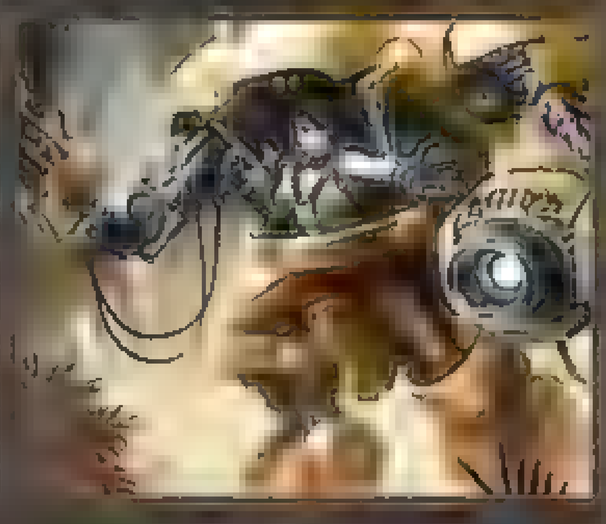
10 Merge layers

Introduce some atmosphere at the bottom to pop the subject out without having to separate her from the background. The layer count is starting to stack up by this point. Before I go to the next step, I merge down some layers on the background into one layer named 'BG'.



11 The colouring begins

Now, I go back to the subject layer and use the Hard Round brush in Color Mode. Under the brush settings, I tick 'Transfer' on and then I set the Opacity Jitter to 'Pen Pressure'. The central focal point is still the female face, so I start off here and slowly make my way out to her shirt and other parts around the figure, but not to the background or foreground just yet.



12 Painting the background

Once the pilot is painted, I move onto the background. I use a mainly maroon and leaf green to colour the background trees and pale yellow for the atmosphere. As for the foreground, I use dark green for the leaves to give quite a silhouette effect. The 'Fire' layout made earlier is replaced by a combination of flat textures. To separate the fire from the black foreground, I use an 'Alpha 1' channel to make the selection, then cross the separated fire texture into a new layer and set the layer mode to 'Screen'.



13 Advanced colour adjustment

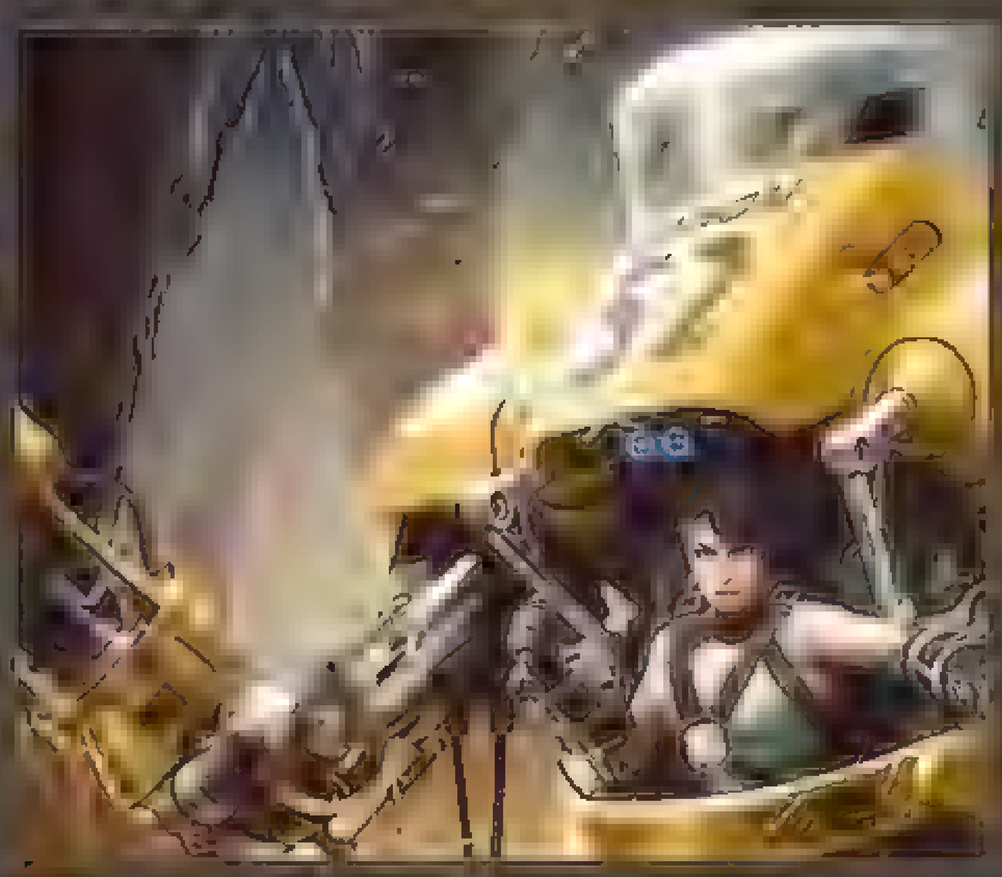
For some advanced adjustments, I add a few more layers of different colour variations above the 'BG' layer. I apply the colours using Transparency Gradient or Soft brushes and then set the layer modes to either 'Screen' or 'Soft Light'. This method can also be applied to the subject and foreground. I'd recommend grouping your layers into folders to keep things tidy.



14 Painting special effects

In the final stages I use extra layers to paint the flares, particles and effects. I also use Adjustment layers that include Brightness/Contrast, Vibrance, Gradient Map and Photo Filter. To paint the particles I use a Hard Round brush with Opacity at 10 per cent to draw lines with bright yellow colour. I then copy the layer, change the colour to bright red using 'Hue/Saturation', add a little 'Motion Blur' filter (about five per cent) to the red particle layer, then change its layer mode to 'Screen'. I merge it with the yellow particle layer, then change the layer mode to 'Screen' again. For the glare effect I use the same method as for the particles but with extra 'Gaussian Blur' of about 10–15 per cent. Then as before, I change the layer mode to 'Screen'.

PRO SECRETS



15 Final touches

Finally, there is also a 'texture canvas' layer to enhance the background, to give it an edgier look. Then, it's a wrap!

Photoshop

REIMAGINE A SCI-FI COMIC CHARACTER

The French comic space heroine Barbarella is given a more cartoony look in the hands of Serge Birault, while still retaining her pin-up aesthetic

Barbarella was a comic book heroine created by Jean-Claude Forest in 1962, who was inspired by the French actress, model and singer Brigitte Bardot. The character became famous outside France with the release of the 1968 film that was directed by Roger Vadim. He gave the role to Jane Fonda, who was his wife at the time. Barbarella the comic was very popular during its two-year run, and is associated with the sexual revolution of the 1960s.

My first idea is to paint her as Jane Fonda, because everybody thinks that Barbarella is the American actress. But a lot of great illustrators, like Frank Frazetta, have tackled the character before me, so I'm keen to do something different. I decide to create a humorous scene, with Barbarella as a cartoon character.

The main challenge will be the tones and the lighting. I'd like the painting to have an old school, painterly feel, but with cartoon elements and 3D-like rendering. So, let's see how I get on...

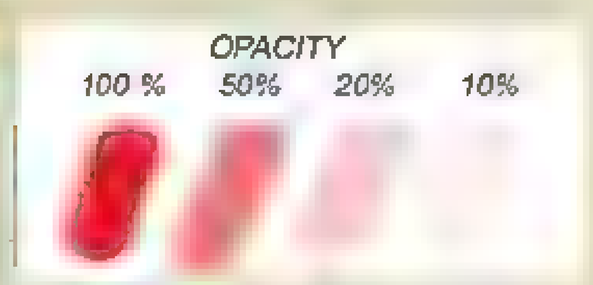


1 Canvas and file size

I'm used to working with very big canvases – usually A3 at 300dpi. At this size it's easy to introduce a lot of details into your art. Current computers are very powerful, and even a basic one can deal with big files. Because I only work with basic tools, I tidy up my interface. I just need my Layers window. Speaking of which, I'm going to create a lot of layers. I don't understand why so many people try to paint on a single one. Layers are the most powerful aspect of digital painting. You can, of course, regularly merge your layers if you feel they're getting out of hand.

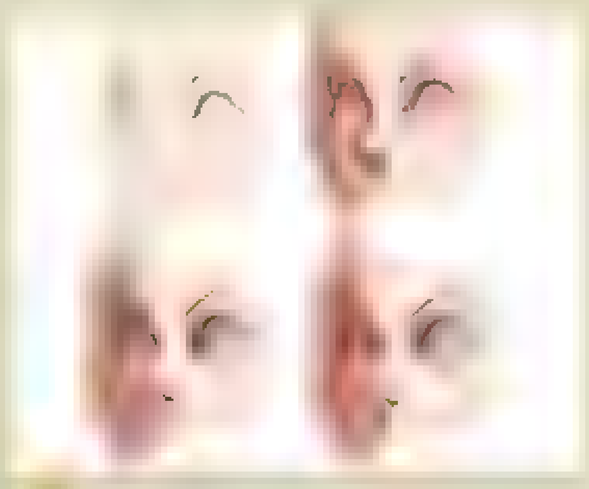
2 Sketch stage

I quickly draw the overall composition. My initial sketch is very basic and I don't spend too much time on it because I usually change my mind and ignore my early drawings. Today's digital art software makes it easy to alter the scale and ratio of elements, and to cut and paste some areas. I do all my doodles with a pack of brushes created by Jan Ditlev Christensen (**www.janditlev.com**). One of these brushes emulates the pencil very well. My idea is to have Barbarella sitting on an Alien egg, holding a small but cute Alien. I put my sketch on a Multiply layer and start painting on a layer under this one.



3 A note on opacity

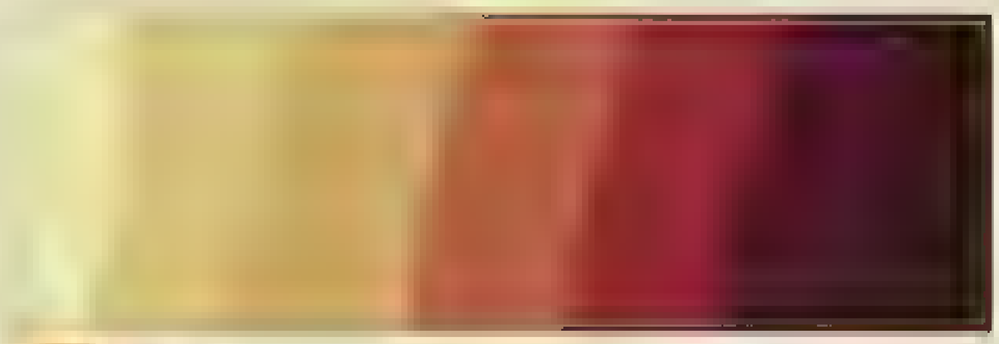
I always start the painting process in the same way. I lay down my base coats with a basic brush at 100 per cent opacity, and then apply my gradients with the Soft Round brush that's set to a low opacity on another layer. Working at such a low opacity (between zero and 10 per cent) is the key to producing effective gradients. Of course, you'll need to lay down a lot of strokes and so this stage takes a little longer than usual, but the end result is well worth it.



4 Replicate an airbrush

I came from a traditional airbrush background. So when I started to work digitally I used the same techniques, and discovered that the Soft Round brush on a low opacity emulates the traditional airbrush very well. It's the best way to blend your colours. My approach involves starting with large brushes, and then gradually decrease their size to add details. The Soft Round brush is easy to get to grips with. My students quickly understand how to use it: in just a few hours they'll be producing clean gradients. Start with simple shapes like a circle. You can obtain a partial 3D effect with just a few strokes and a bit of patience.





5 The thinking behind my palette

I don't use the same palette every time I start a new painting. But I have my favourite tones and I'm going to try to explain how I choose my palette. In a lot of my pictures, I add specific colours to a basic palette: some cyan to my bright tones, some green to my middle tones, and some magenta to my dark tones. This time, I'd like to add these colours to an 'old school' palette. If you look at art from the 60s and 70s, you'll see plenty of saturated colours. There's a lot of red on the darkest tones and a lot of yellow on the brightest ones.

6 Persevere with your colour choices

Yes, I know, it's not easy to do. When you learn how to paint traditionally, it's easy to add a colour to another one. If you're not familiar with traditional methods, think how you can do the same with your software. You can carry out adjustments, and create Color or Difference layers. Spend time trying to produce an interesting palette. Don't work with only two or three colours – use a lot of tones. And remember your colour theory. I'll be using a lot of purples, oranges and greens; all these tones work well together. My palette is going to change during the process. I'm going to do a lot of adjustments. It's so easy with a computer, so let's experiment!

7 The lighting

There'll be a lot of different light sources in this scene. An ambient green light, a white light for the sky (on the top left), a yellow one from the right and a very bright green one from the egg. It's not going to be simple, but it is going to be fun to paint! I'll add the light sources one after the other.

8 Begin with the face

I always start with the face of the main character. I take a loose approach because it's a cartoon character, and just try to paint a cute face with big eyes and a small nose. I'll no doubt change a lot of details during all the painting process. Sometimes I only cut and paste some elements and change their size or ratio. As you can see, I've started with a basic colour palette, going from yellow to red. I change my palette along the way.

9 And on to the hair

Barbarella's haircut is incredible. Blonde and curvy hair is a real nightmare to paint. If you're familiar with ImagineFX, take a look at the cover I did for issue 62's Halloween theme. The only good way to paint realistic hair is to spend an incredible amount of time on it, painting one strand at a time. And that's very boring. For this workshop I decide that realistic hair wouldn't fit with her cartoon face, and so I paint it as if it were a plastic or vinyl figure. As it turns out, the reflections are more interesting with this rendering approach.

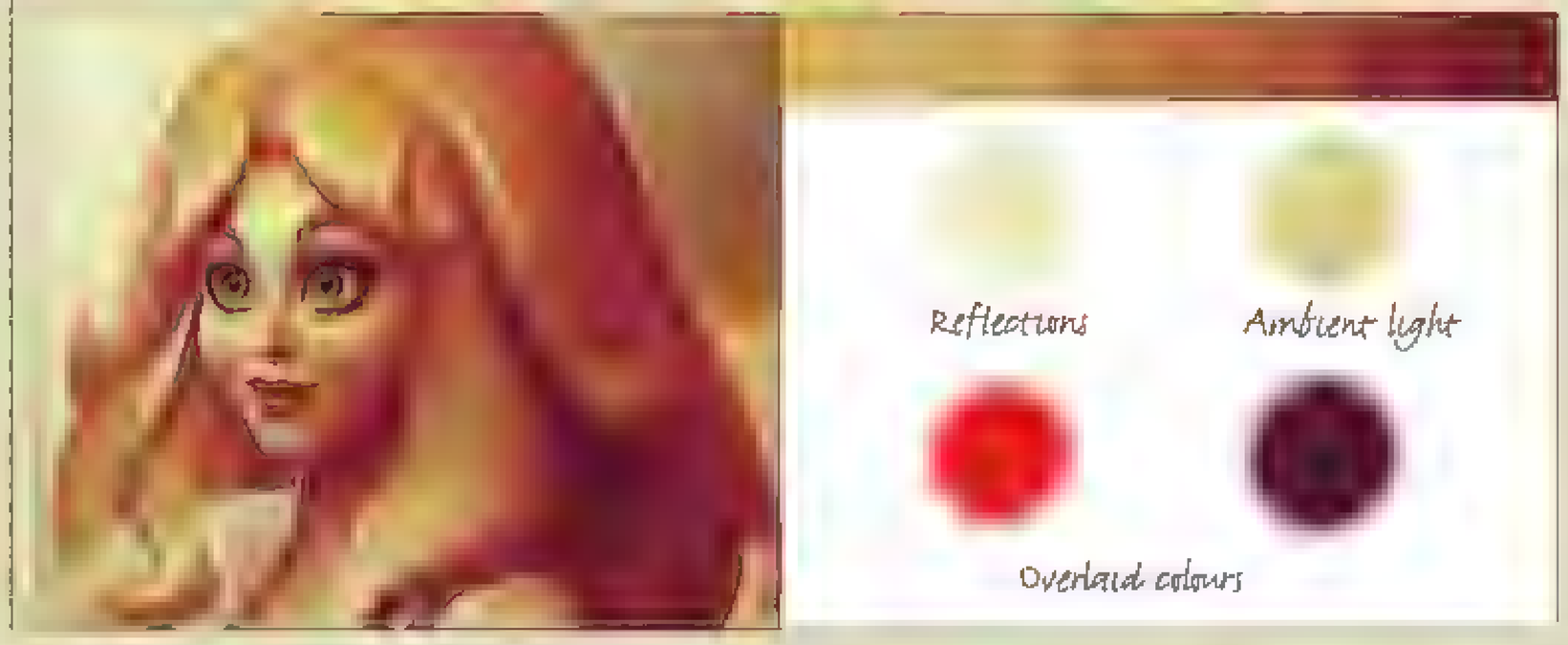
PRO SECRETS

Stick with the basics

10 Barbarella's body

For the flesh tones, I pick the colours that I used for Barbarella's face. Because there are multiple light sources I want to emulate a lot of sub-surface scattering. It's easy to do: just add a bit of red on an Overlay layer. The white clothes have to reflect the ambient light, so they have to be slightly green. I add the reflections from the other light sources, one by one.





The Alien

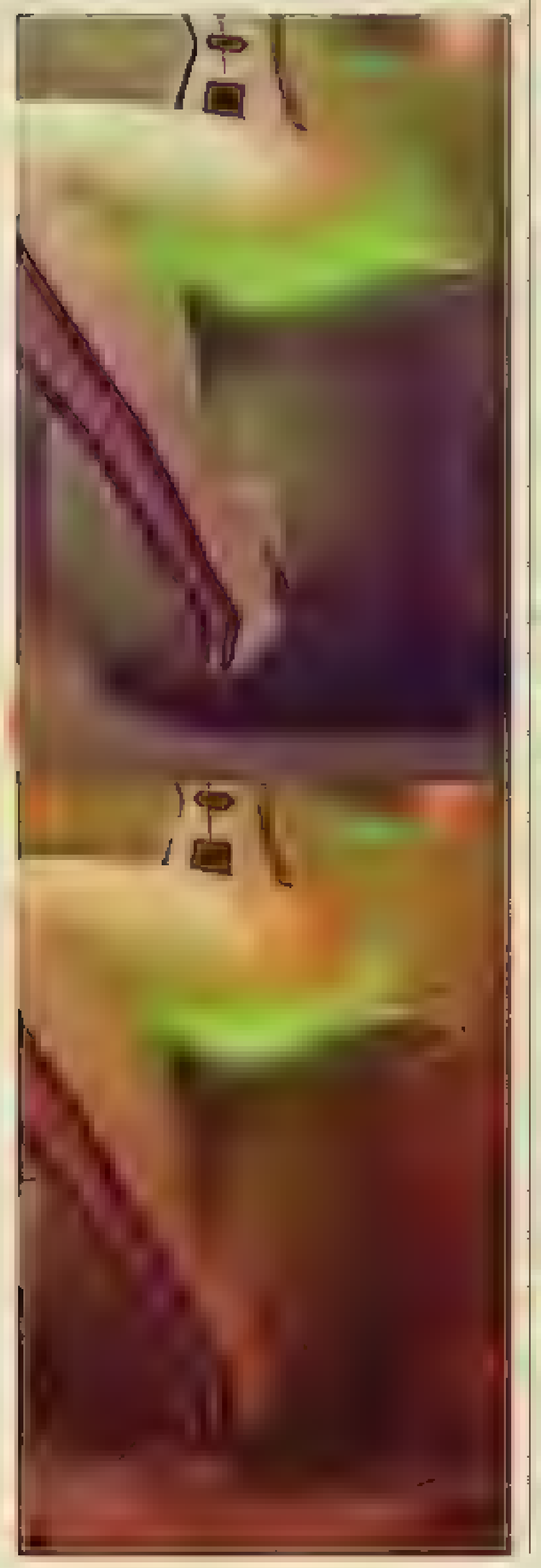
This is a relatively simple element of the scene. I turn the classic Alien monster into a cute pet. The Alien's skin is very shiny and reflective, but it's only affected by very soft light so I don't have to work on it much. Here's a little tip if you have to work on very dark tones: create a white Overlay layer above your current layer. This will increase your contrast and you'll be able to see if your gradients are working or not.



The Alien egg

I don't paint the Alien egg as it appears in the films. A toad-like texture is more fun to paint. Once again, I add the light and the reflections separately. The egg is also a source of light, and a very bright one at that. I paint the light effect using the Soft Round brush on a low opacity (very low, in fact, because it's a saturated green). The Alien facehugger is stuck underneath Barbarella's bottom, so I only have to paint one or two legs.



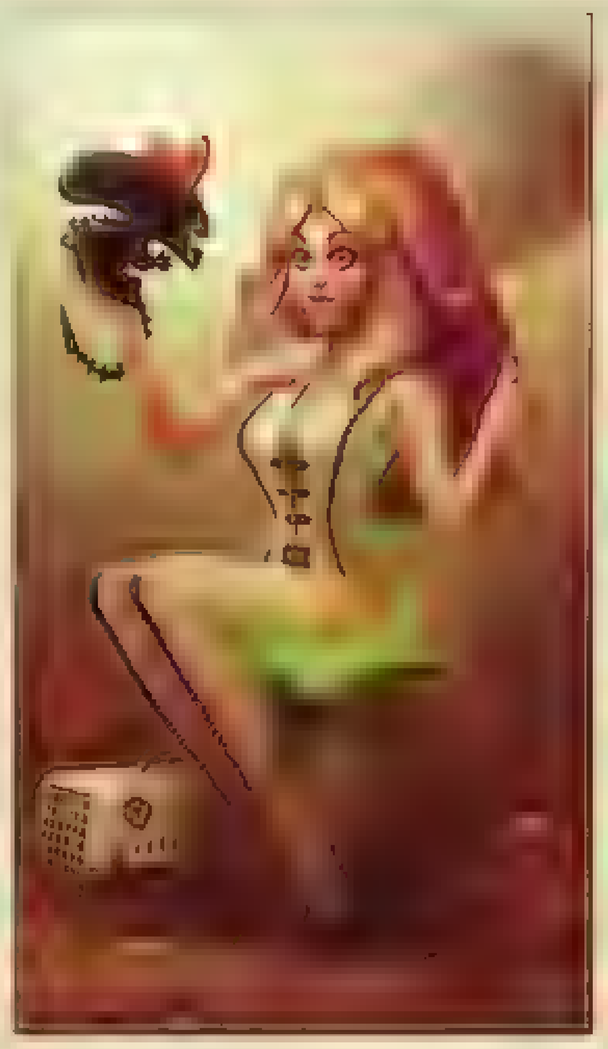


Background elements

I track down photo references for the travel box, the bone and the skull. Those little elements are important for the storytelling that's going on in the scene. The background usually isn't very important to me – I'm a pin-up painter, after all! But this time I spend a lot of time on it, especially on the ground. I search for some photo references of desert, rocks, sand and stones. I paint in all the little stones, and with the many light sources it gets a little… complicated. The sky may look simple, but there are a lot of different colours and nuances to it.

Minor adjustments

All digital art software have impressive tools that enable you to carry out adjustments. You can easily change the tones, the contrast, the hue or the luminosity of your picture. I spend a lot of time trying and testing. I find that this is a rewarding part of the picture's creation.





SketchBook Pro

ADOPT A FRESH CREATIVE PROCESS

Take your first steps with SketchBook Pro. Illustrator **Nick Harris** reveals all you need to know about using this budget art software

SketchBook Pro has been permanently on my system since version 2, before Autodesk took charge of it. It's always been a great sketching tool The software's simplicity and ease of use make it a no-brainer to use for initial drawing, there's minimal fiddling with settings, no plethora of palettes you seldom touch, and superb stylus response. It's perfect for preliminary sketches, dropped into another software for painting (Painter in the old days, ArtRage more recently)

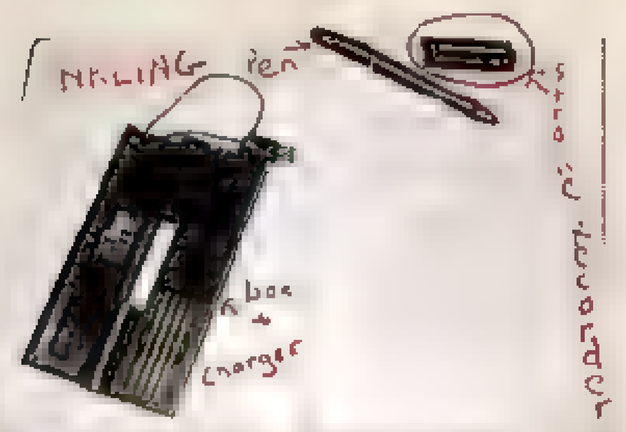
There were no textures or blend modes for layers in early versions of SketchBook Pro. While capable of taking an image to a full colour finish, other software suited my working methods better. All this has changed in the past six or seven years.

In SketchBook Pro 6, with the fantastic stylus response intact, Autodesk has augmented the brush controls to offer more customisation, while keeping it easy to create your own. A raft of new Synthetic Paint and Smudge brushes enable you to smear pixels around like oil paint. The blend modes brought in a few versions ago remain, but they now have the ability to adjust various layer values, such as colour saturation. Check out Bobby Chiu's excellent vidcap showing how he employs this. **www.bit.ly/sketch-chui**

Here I'm going to paint a silly picture and hopefully cover enough of the basics of using SketchBook Pro 6 to encourage you to give it a try if you haven't already, while introducing the little-reported Goblin Space Programme in the process

The original idea for this is from master Dean's fevered brow, so it's not just me who gets quirky notions!

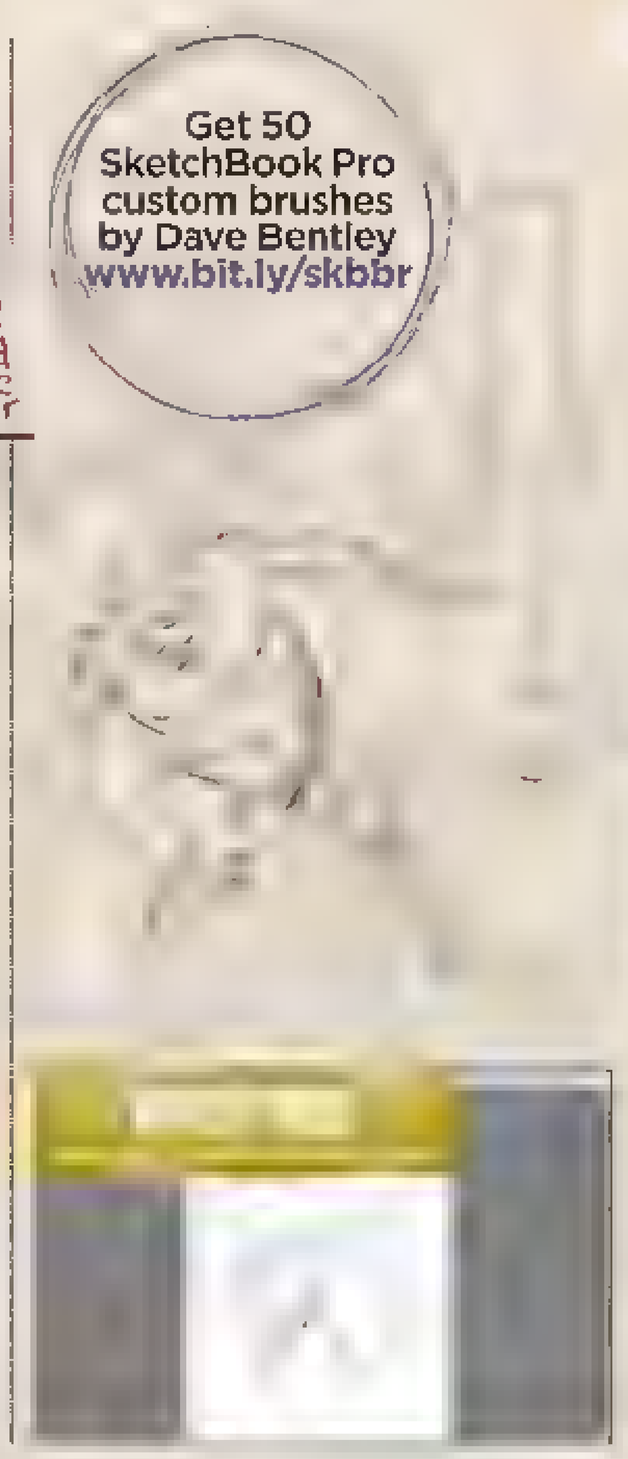




Get 50 SketchBook Pro custom brushes by Dave Bentley **www.bit.ly/skbbr**

1 Initial sketch

I sketch some figure poses on paper using a Wacom Inkling, because it's something SketchBook Pro can not only open but offer certain possibilities for Dependent on which brush and size are selected in SketchBook Pro, a sketch imported through Wacom Inkling's interface will be redrawn using that brush-line. I only mention this because it might be useful to know. Normally I work from scratch in SketchBook Pro. The Inkling pen does have a nice touch, though



2 Rough composition

I refine my focal character sketch in the foreground. Foregoing the usual thumbnailing, I look at scrapyard images online and mark out some shapes using the Pencil tool. I use the Ruler tool to set out some basic perspective, and toggle the other palettes out of the way, using the Tab key

PRO SECRETS

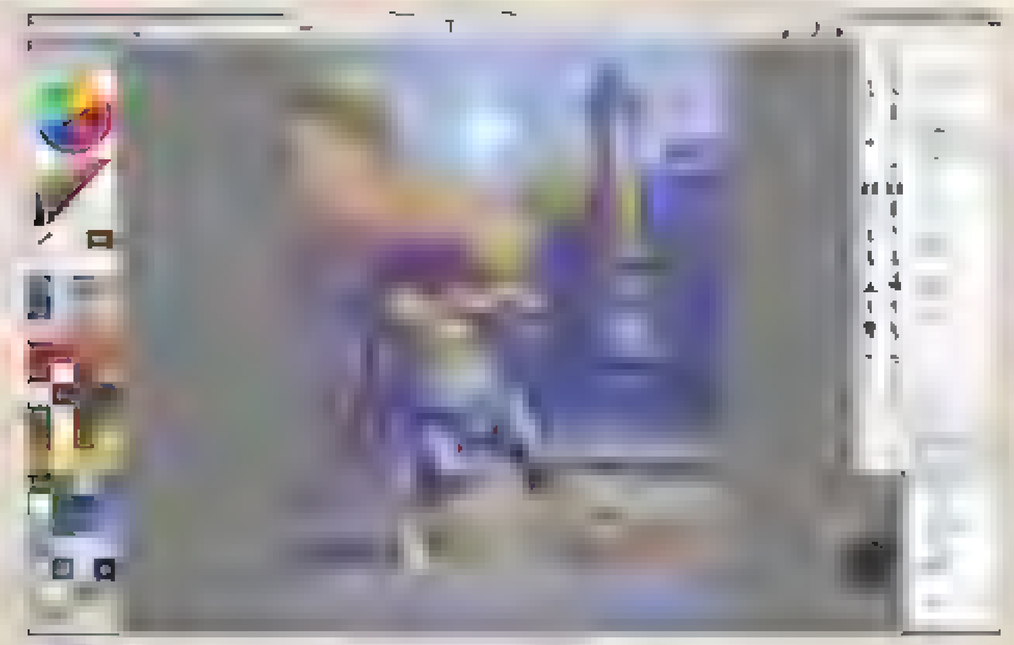
Stay hungry for knowledge

A little rich coming from a fuddy-duddy like me but reading about how different artists approach things can often unlock doors to new directions and release reserves of energy. It can also offer fresh perspective on something you thought you'd covered, which can sometimes be borderline complacency. As someone who draws and paints almost exclusively out of my head, it's an easy trap for me to fall into and I do so regularly.



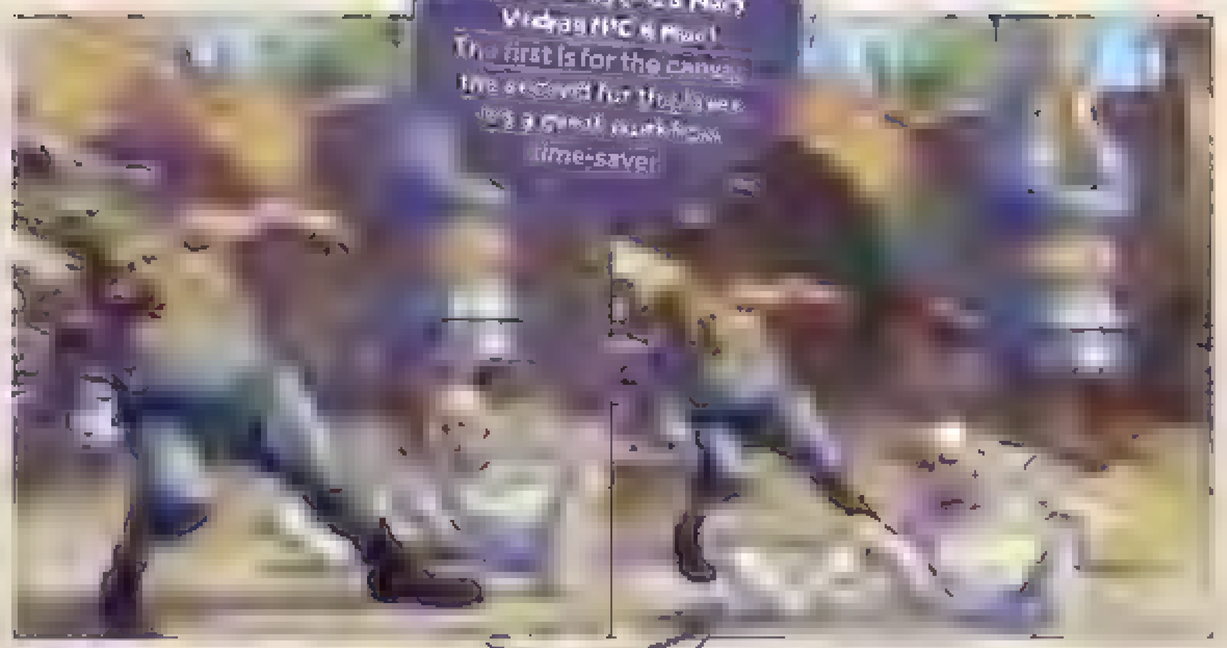
3 Block in tonal areas

With the loose drawing spread across various layers set to Multiply, I flood fill the background with a warm mid-tone. Then I paint in some of the larger colour blocks, such as the sky and the brick walls, using a combination of textural and non-textural brushes. Keeping the ground texture on a separate layer enables me to transform it to conform more to the ground plane I then introduce lighting on new layers set to Multiply.



4 Pick your focal points

At this stage my idea is about the foreground character having misjudged both the thrust needed for lift-off and how far to stand away after lighting the blue touch paper. The rocket and the character need to read well to get the idea across. I silhouette the rocket against the sky and frame the goblin in the dark shape of a background arch I paint in lighting layers to build up form.



7 Be bold

It quickly becomes apparent that the main problem with the composition is the initial character. His pose makes little sense where he is now. I decide to demote him to a secondary role behind the seated goblin. With SketchBook Pro lacking Layer Groups, I collapse the appropriate layers to be able to perform the necessary transformations. Then I patch the lighting layers to conform as well. It's worth it. I feel the revised idea and composition work much better.



5 Consolidation and cows

As I work out the forms better I can develop a more convincing shadow pattern, and start to enjoy playing with colour on the various elements. I still believe there's a lot of room for improvement on my lame interpretation of Ian's brief and the composition. For starters, how about a methane propulsion system for the rocket? Cows are renowned for methane production, so why not strap cows to the rocket? Definitely some room for humour with that notion





8 Little things make a difference

Because the emphasis of idea and composition has shifted, the emotional display of the characters needs to change, too. While the slightly bemused expression on our initial guy is still okay, I feel the situation could look more humorous if the new foreground figure looked somewhat peeved. This can be easily done with some minor tweaking to the angles of the eyebrows and furrowed forehead. This small amendment sharpens up the whole dynamic between them. Facial expressions are a useful tool for storytelling in a composition. Everybody looks at them



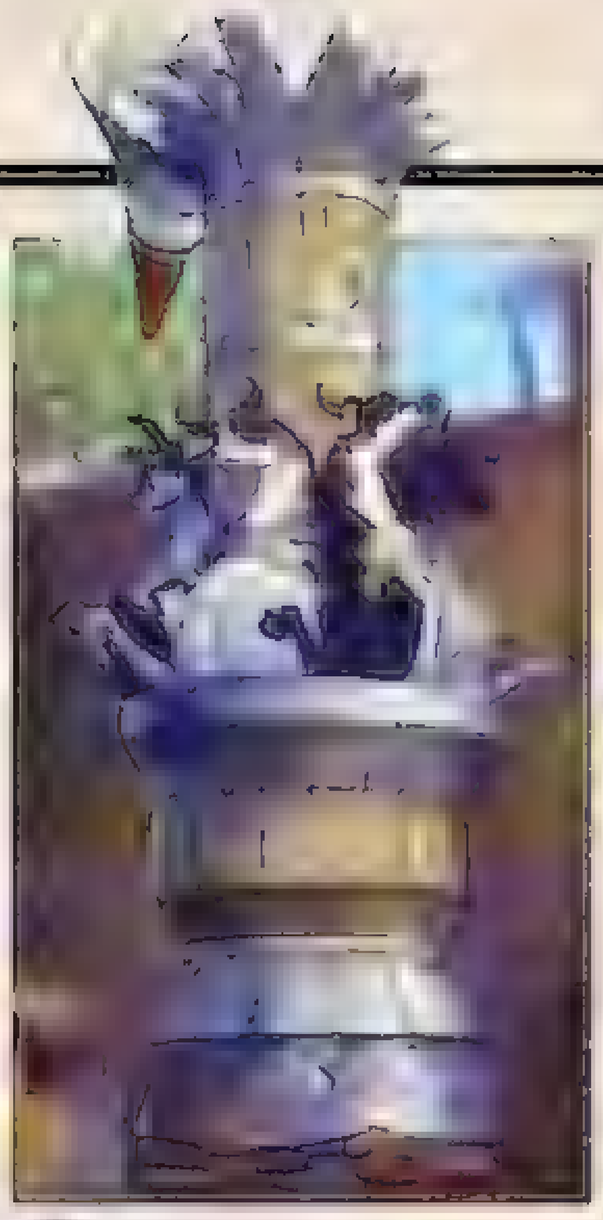
6 If it's broke, fix it

Im no longer happy with the main character's pose and the composition. It feels too contrived. I flip the idea to having the top blow off the rocket, and in doing so can introduce some rather stunned-looking Gobstronauts. I insert these across two new layers of drawing (set to Multiply blend mode) and body colour. It livens things up immediately, as does the pile of car scrap developing on the left.



9 Some holes need filling

Altering a composition naturally creates holes where there were none before. A) The arch formerly filled by the demoted main character becomes mission control of a sort. B) A bit bright here, but adding a spot of colour to the nose cone gives it more punch and balances the upper and lower areas better. C) By placing Grumpy's hand below his own knee I avoid a potential clash with Demoted Gobby's legs.

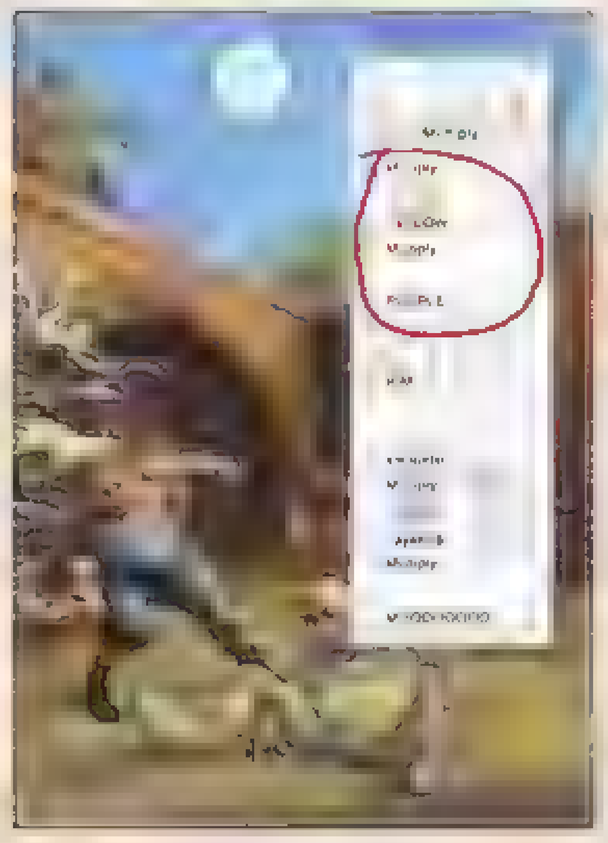


10 Think silhouettes

This is a rule of thumb in illustration and animation, easily forgotten in mid-struggle with image creation. My 'moothane' battery has odd poses and shapes for comic effect that a real cow can't make. They need clarification. Boosting their pattern contrast to black and white Friesian does the trick to make them pop. Anatomy Drawing School. Animal Anatomy **(www.bit.ly/anat-animal)** is the book I turn to, to help add a few touches that distract from the physical impossibility.

11 Double-edged sword

Laying a unifying colour wash over existing tones can add subtlety but dulls any fine-tuned contrast. It's a technique I used for years in real watercolour. I flood fill a yellowish layer set to Multiply, but erase/paint white the sky area and accentuate highlights. I complement the yellow with another shadow layer set to Multiply, adding purple in selected areas.





12 Look for balance

By balance I don't mean symmetry, although that can work. I consider the overall composition to gauge the power each element has to draw attention. The top edge of the brick wall is dividing the composition too abruptly. Adding more foliage behind it softens the effect. I use the Hard Round brush from the texture category and a custom Leaf brush.

13 Bring in new brushes

Importing your custom brushes into SketchBook is pretty straightforward. A combination of the Hard Round brush for volume and my or your own DIY foliage brush can quickly build up a good working base for leaf cover. Work dark to light and think about introducing some Hue Variation in the brush settings.

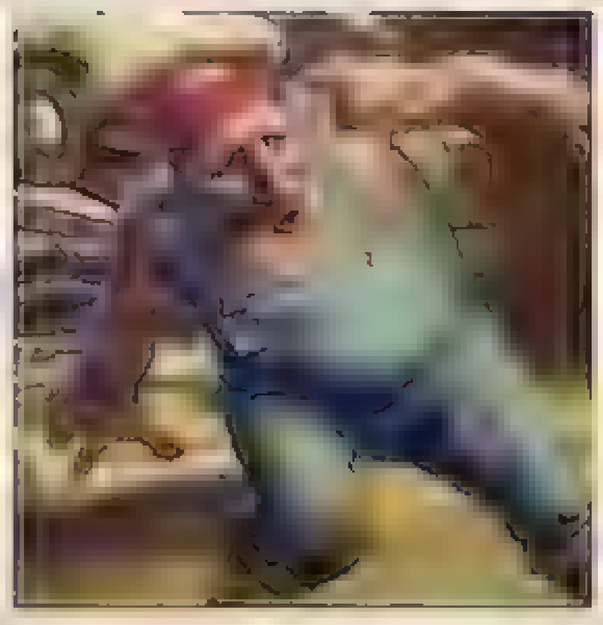


Shortcuts

Brush opacity

[illegible] (PC & Mac)

This is another helpful way to improve your workflow in SketchBook Pro. Give it a try and see what you think.



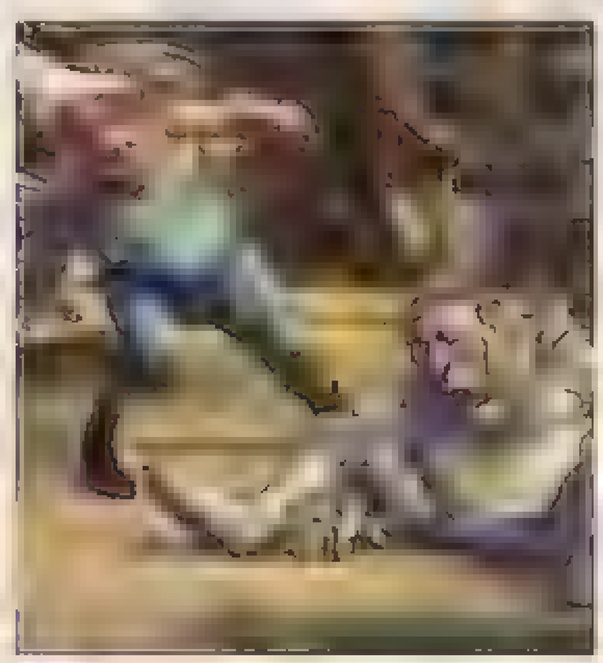
14 Colour your judgement

I notice that Demoted Gobby's hat now competes with the hues and tones directly behind. To bring him forward again I repaint the hat, by duplicating his body colour layer and activating the Transparency Lock. This enables me to quickly match/cover the loose fibres with the new colour. I then unlock the layer and erase all but the hat. Finally, I reduce the opacity slightly and merge the layers down.

PRO SECRETS

Accessible software

It's no longer essential to have the most expensive, most powerful hardware and/or software to draw and paint digitally. With technological advances pushing pixels on a budget is more available than ever. Find what software suits the particular way you tick. While I go on about SketchBook Pro and ArtRage being the bee's knees, it may well be that Photoshop is the perfect tool for you. However, don't make the expensive mistake of assuming so without seriously trying the more affordable alternatives.



15 Don't be afraid

As you near the finish line and still feel there are things that might be added or taken away to strengthen the composition, don't be afraid to try it. Digital is endlessly forgiving. I slap in some grass layers and create two new texture brushes to bolster the foreground. I want to accentuate the foreground to make Grumpy a stronger focal area.



16 Flatten and fine tune

Often I find this is the nicest part of painting. Tweaking those tonal values, adding little colour accents and such. The deadline beckons on this and much more I'd like to do. I settle for adding and transforming a text layer letter G, rasterising it and filling it with a colour to drop on Grumpy's badge. That control centre van is crying out for more whimsical attention, as are the many scrappily drawn areas. Ho-hum – time's up, the painting is finished.

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Zombie Playground © Mo

BALLISTIC PUBLISHING'S MASSIVE BLACK VOLUME TWO

For close to a decade, concept art studio Massive Black has created artwork, illustration, and animation for some of the biggest games, movies, and TV shows known today. This book is the second volume of their work available in print.



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Image courtesy: Nele Kumpe
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Paint Tool SAI

CUSTOMISE AND CREATE BRUSHES



Why make do with just the standard tools? In SAI you can tweak your favourite brushes and set up new ones, as **Paco Rico Torres** explains

Paint Tool SAI is a pretty basic program and although it doesn't feature too many tools, like as we've already seen, with the few tools it does have you can still achieve a lot.

You can create a new tool (by right-clicking one of the empty squares on the Tool tray), and set the parameters to your liking and save it as a new tool.

For example, you can create a new Pen tool, set it to emulate a charcoal using the tool's parameters, name it 'Charcoal', and that's it – your own custom charcoal tool ready to use.

But sometimes you need more than that: more textures perhaps, or more brush tips. In this case, you'll need to create them from scratch. So here's how you do it.

1 Get to know your folders

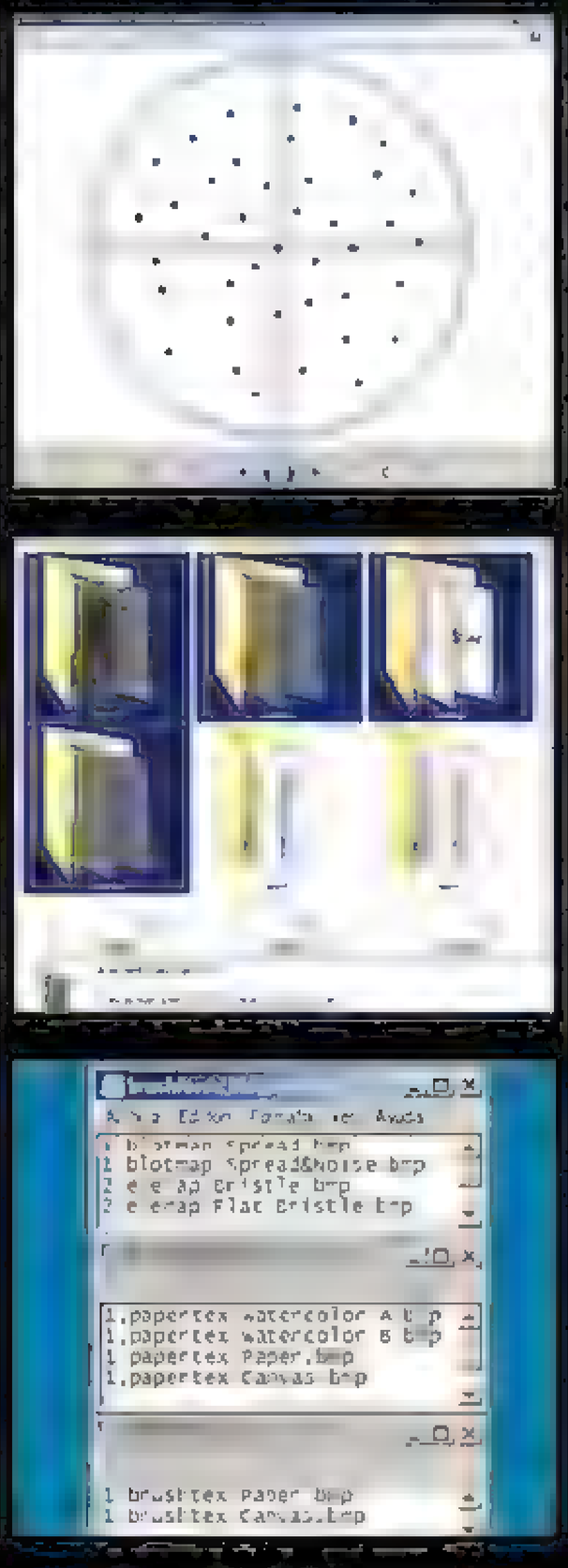
Take a look in your SAI folder and there you'll see some more folders, with names such as 'elemap', 'blotmap', 'brushtext', 'papertext' and so on. Inside these folders there are some files and these are the brushes and textures that you can use in SAI: 'elemap' and 'blotmap' are for brush shapes, while 'brushtext' and 'papertext' are for textures (brushes and layers).

2 Create some custom files

Now you have to create some new files and place them in the right folders. You need to create a very specific file for each thing. For example, all the files in the elemap folder need to be 63x63 RGB. When they're saved as a BMP file, you'll see a blue crosshair in the middle. So the best thing to do is to copy the default files and use them as templates for your custom ones.

3 Find and name the .COMF files

Finally, you have to look for the .COMF files in the SAI root folder. There should be three in there: 'brushform', 'brushtext' and 'papertext' (for shapes, texture and layer texture, respectively). You have to open the appropriate one using the notepad and write '2' if it's an elemap, or '1' if it's anything else, and then the name of the folder and the name of the file.

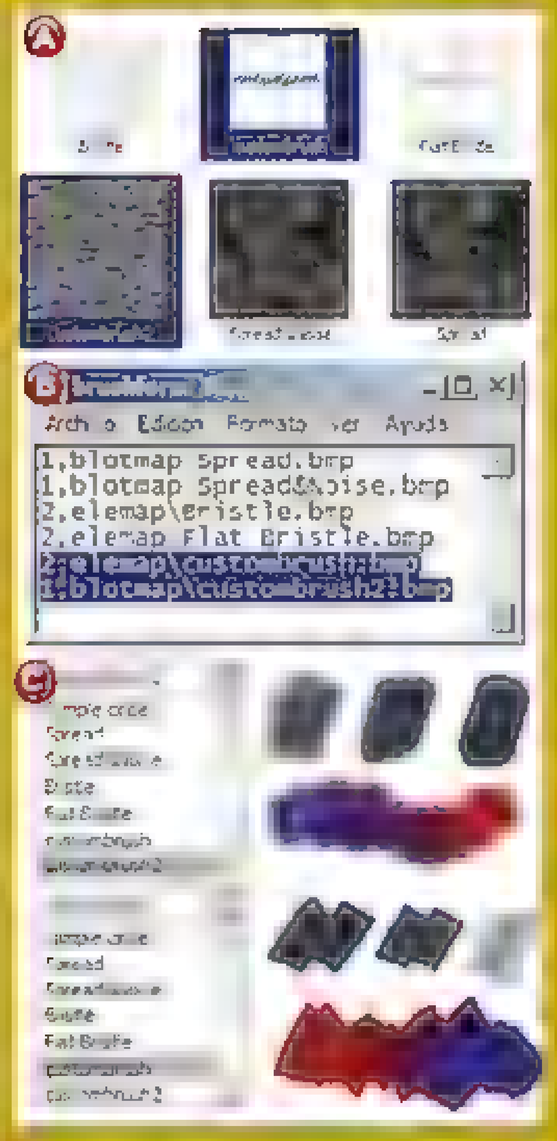


Artist PROFILE



Paco is a freelance illustrator who's worked on art for several card games, magazines and books. www.bit.ly/fxpaco

HOW TO CREATE CUSTOM BRUSHES IN PAINT TOOL SAI



A. Duplicate files

First I duplicate one of the files in the 'elemap' folder, delete all the black dots using Photoshop (preserving the blue crosshair) and paint new ones according to my liking. Then I rename it as 'custombrush'. I do the same with one of the files on the blotmap folder and I rename

B. Brushshapes

I want to create new brush shapes, so open 'BRUSHFORM.COMF' using the notepad [illegible] shapes, and here I add the following lines:

[illegible]

and then I save it and close.

C. Ready for use

Finally, if I have done everything right, the next time I open SAI, my new custom brush shapes should be there, ready to use.



Photoshop

DEPICT A UNIQUE FACIAL EXPRESSION

Giving a character a fresh expression can be tough, but **Max Kostenko** explains how it's done, using light and shadow to create the right mood

I've been keen to draw a girl in the Russian national headdress for a long time now. Its form was the main attraction, in it I see something fabulous and extraterrestrial and I want to combine this item with a fantastic world. I have the idea of portraying a female warrior, a Siberian Queen.

Before starting a painting, I usually study a range of pictures and illustrations, and a face begins to slowly emerge more or less as a clear picture in my mind. I have a certain way of drawing; I use different techniques every time. Sometimes I start with a black and white sketch, sometimes I paint in colour right away.

For me it's like a journey. I never know where my subconscious will lead me, so to create a workshop isn't a simple task. Often when drawing I rely on my feelings rather than any rules to guide me. It's hard to describe what's going on in my head while I work. So here I'll explain the points on which I pay most attention.

I love painting in a realistic style, but at the same time I enjoy exploring fantasy ideas. I don't paint in a photographic style; it's somewhere between cartoon and realistic. It's the anatomical mistakes that I think add to fantasy artwork, especially when dealing with facial expression, which is what I aim to convey in this workshop.

Artist PROFILE

Max Kostenko

COUNTRY: Russia



Max is a 26-year-old freelance artist living in Moscow who creates character designs and illustrations for animation projects and advertising.

www.max-kostenko.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

www.bit.ly/9s-expression



1 Start the sketch

I start by making quick sketches without trying to be neat. I paint with a big brush, if I don't like something I just delete and I start over. I am looking for a silhouette of my character. I already know I want the girl to be wearing a headdress, in Russia it is called a kokoshnik. Usually this process of searching for an interesting silhouette takes me hours, on this occasion I feel I am nearly there so I leave the sketch and take time away from the process to return with fresh eyes, just to be sure it's working.



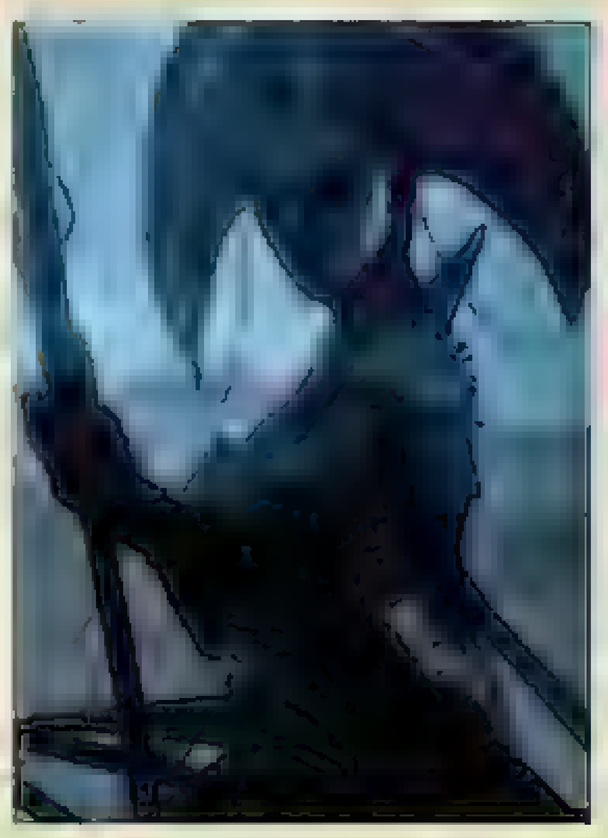
2 Develop the details

Leaving the original sketch on a separate layer, so I can return to it at any time, I start studying the silhouette in more detail. At this point I'm not trying to draw the details of the face, but simply outline the dark colour of the eyes, the shadow under the nose and lips. Periodically I relax my eyes and paint loosely, which helps me to see the similarities while not paying too much attention to fine detail. Through light and shadow I'm beginning to build a mood and an expression.

PRO SECRETS

Check your silhouette

Make sure your character's silhouette is clearly readable. If the background is light the silhouette should be dark and vice versa. Avoid mid-tones so that the character doesn't dissolve into the background.



3 Make some decisions

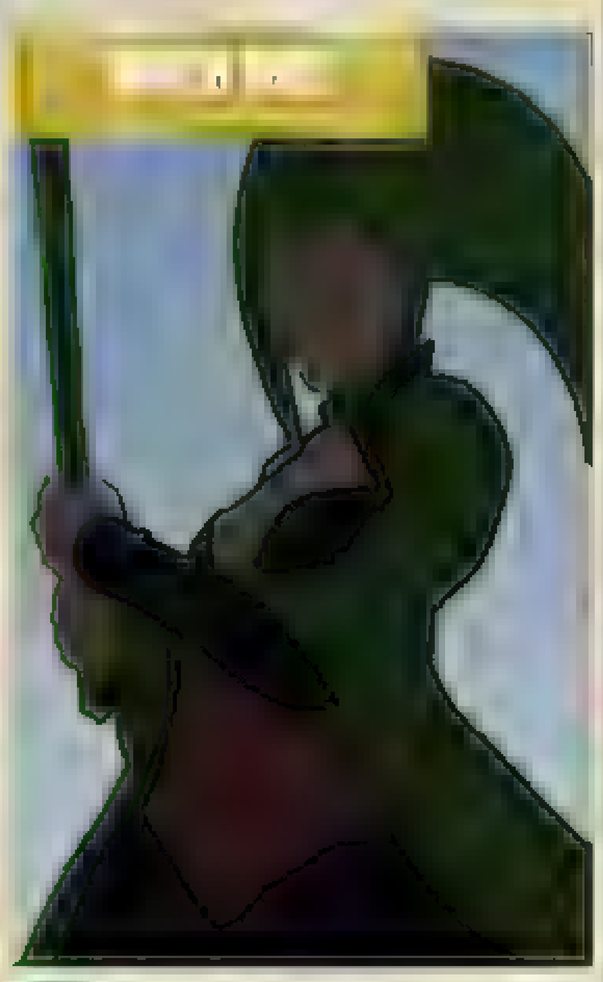
At this stage I test out some colours. I fill in a layer with blue tones and set it above the layer with my sketch. I then turn this new colour layer to Multiply and try different shades. Using the Hue/Saturation sliders, I change the colour and brightness of the sketch. I also try a different light. But I like the original when the person is illuminated from the side and the rest is illuminated by light from the environment. So, before I start working on the character, I've decided a few things: the background won't be dark, it's probably dawn, the direct light source is on the right, and the rest of the face is in shadow.



Shortcuts
Hue/Saturation
Ctrl+U (PC)
Cmd+U (Mac)
For quick adjustments, use this shortcut to access the Hue/Saturation tool

4 Anatomy adjustments

I now take my rough sketches and start fixing anatomy and composition problems. I correct the position of hands and the head, and as a result I need to raise a shoulder and develop a new head position to fit the expression I have in my mind. I want her to look stern, so I tilt the head so she looks down at the viewer.



5 Start to paint

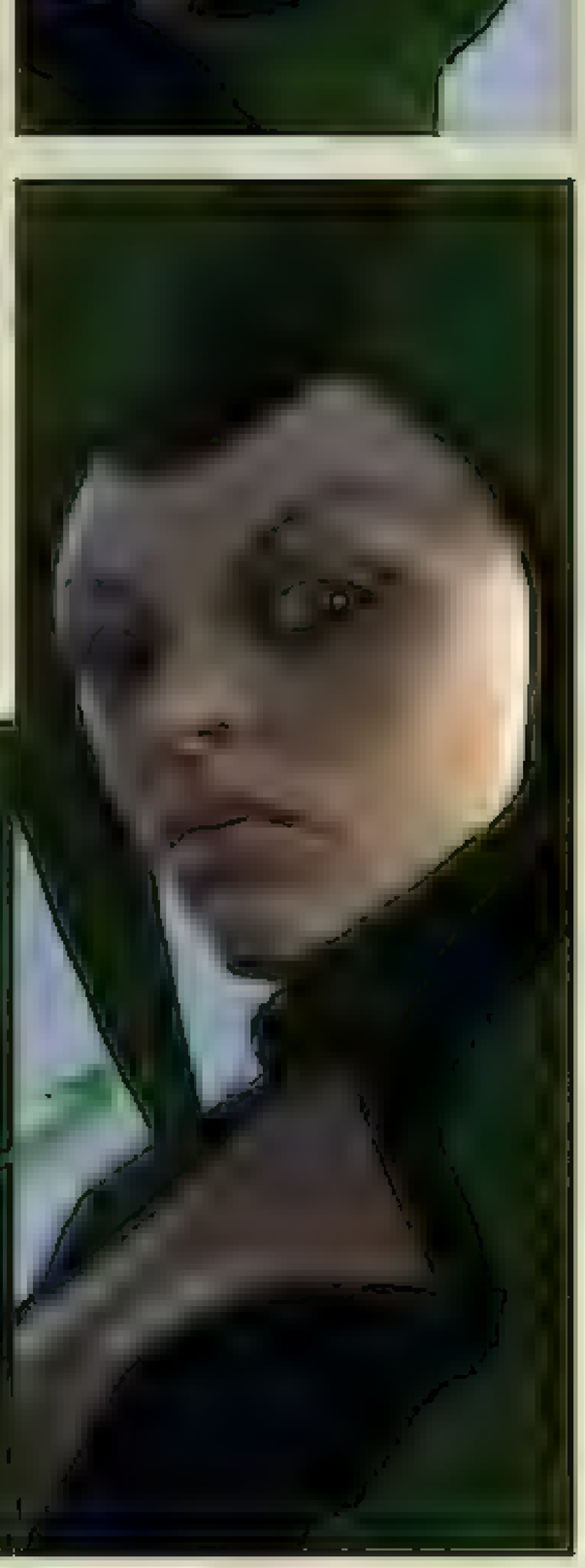
I create a new layer over the silhouette and in separate layers I paint over the figure to depict the many different elements of her suit. I always paint from dark to light, so initially I'm only using dark colours.

6 Define the lighting

On a new layer set to Multiply I add the shadows. Then using an Overlay layer I paint a direct light source. Once I'm happy with the lighting I merge the layers, then start painting the character. In areas where she's in shadow I use blue colours sampled from the sky background. On the right on her cheekbone I paint in some yellowish-orange highlights.

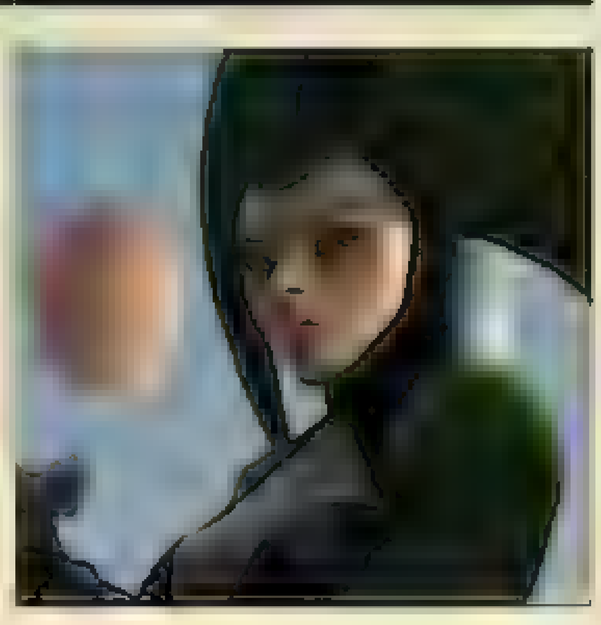
7 Develop the expression

Now I can begin painting my character and her expression in earnest. For this I don't use any particular reference, but if there are difficulties with any part of the character I study photos on the internet. Note that I'm drawing from their feelings and expressions, rather than trying to depict a realistic face. I avoid symmetry as well as adhering to the original perspective. As I work I decide it would be better if the right-hand-side light illuminates her face more, so I add some highlights on the nose and lips. At the same time, I reserve the darkest parts of the character to the areas around eye sockets, nostrils and the strip between the lips. Finally, I begin to refine the face and her expression using the Smudge tool. I then reduce the size of the lips, cheekbones and forehead.



8 Blend the skin tones

To give the skin a more natural colour I select a pinkish tone and using a wide brush I loosely blend this into areas around the face before using blue tones on the eyelids and under her eyes to boost the shadows. By working generally you can often miss details, so I always keep in mind that the face is an oval shape. I then add a highlight on the nose and the corner of the eye. I always take care with highlights – I don't want my characters to look wet and shiny.



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SAMPLE BRUSH 71
I use this brush for sketching at the start of my process.

SAMPLE BRUSH 3
A brush for textures. I use it to add the effect of roughness to cloth.

777777
I use this basic brush for 80 percent of my work.

SAMPLE BRUSH 154
A very simple brush but it produces very good results if you're painting an animal or skin.

OIL PASTEL LARGE
I use this to create clouds. Together with the Smudge tool it gives excellent results.

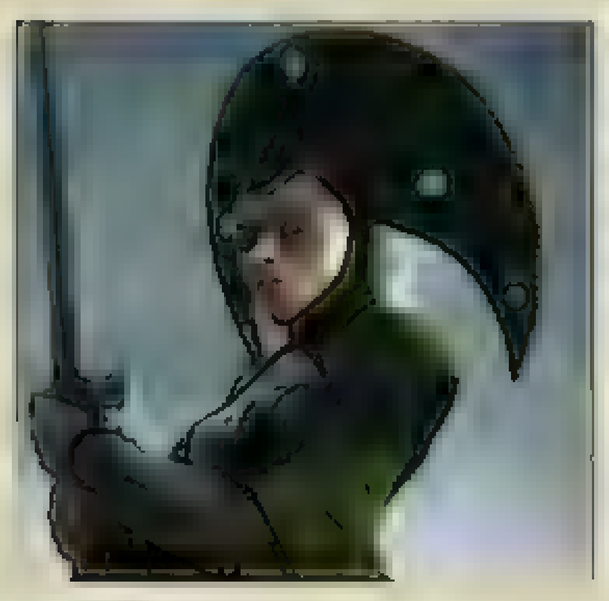
9 Reshape the face

Because my character is a warrior queen holding a sword, I don't want her to look young and pretty. So I slightly repaint the shape of her face. By reducing the round plump face to sharp lines and an angular look, she feels older and her expression has become harsher. I decide that the hat isn't interesting enough so I add some bright spots by painting in a red stitched border



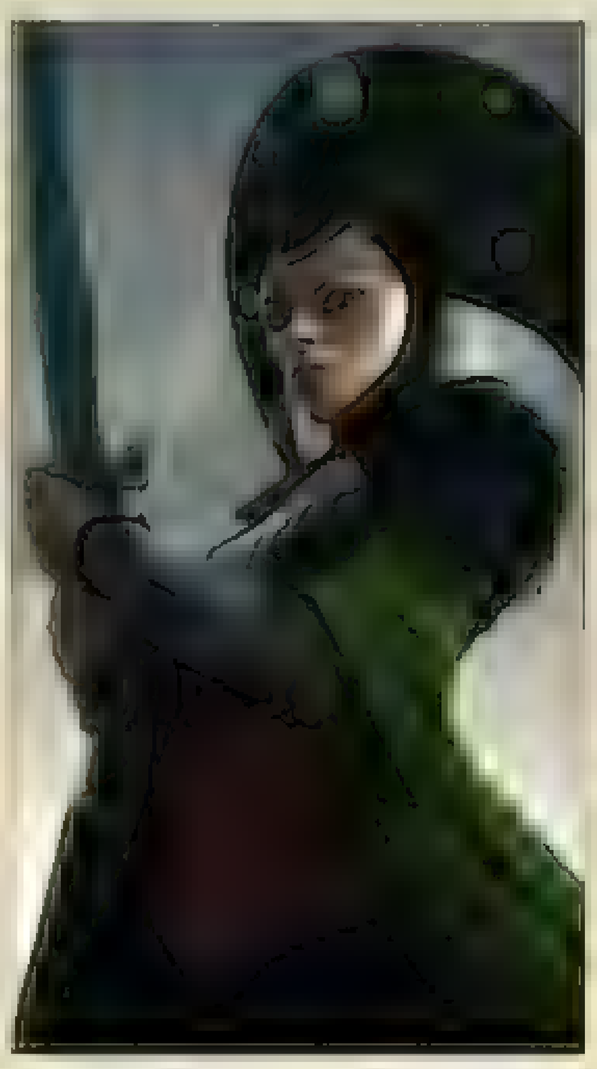
10 Limit the colour

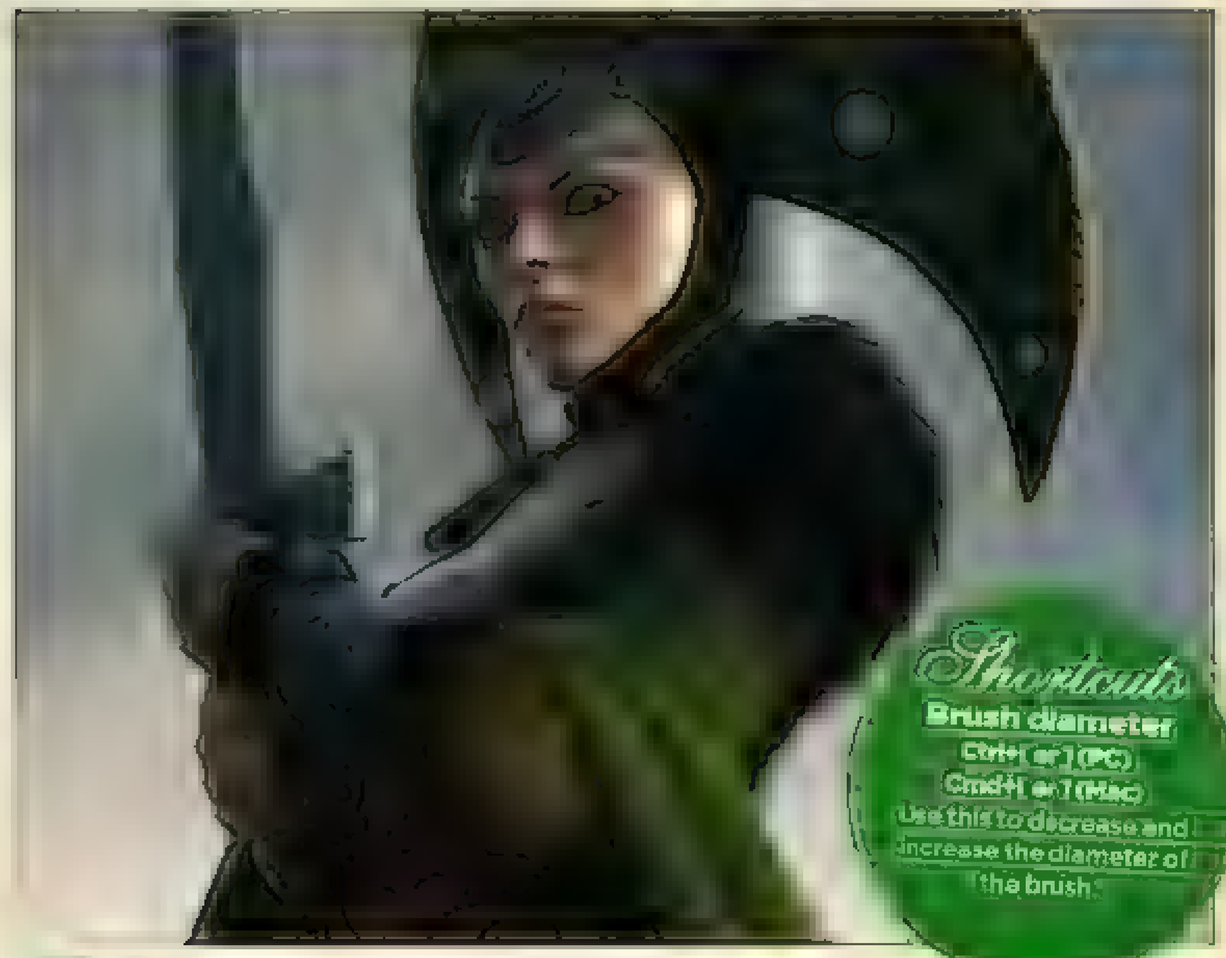
I prefer to work in a controlled, limited colour palette, so I replace the red edging with a gold colour. I also add a subtle pattern on the hat and bright glass elements, paying attention to the size and colour to ensure they don't feel overbearing



11 Adjusting the hand

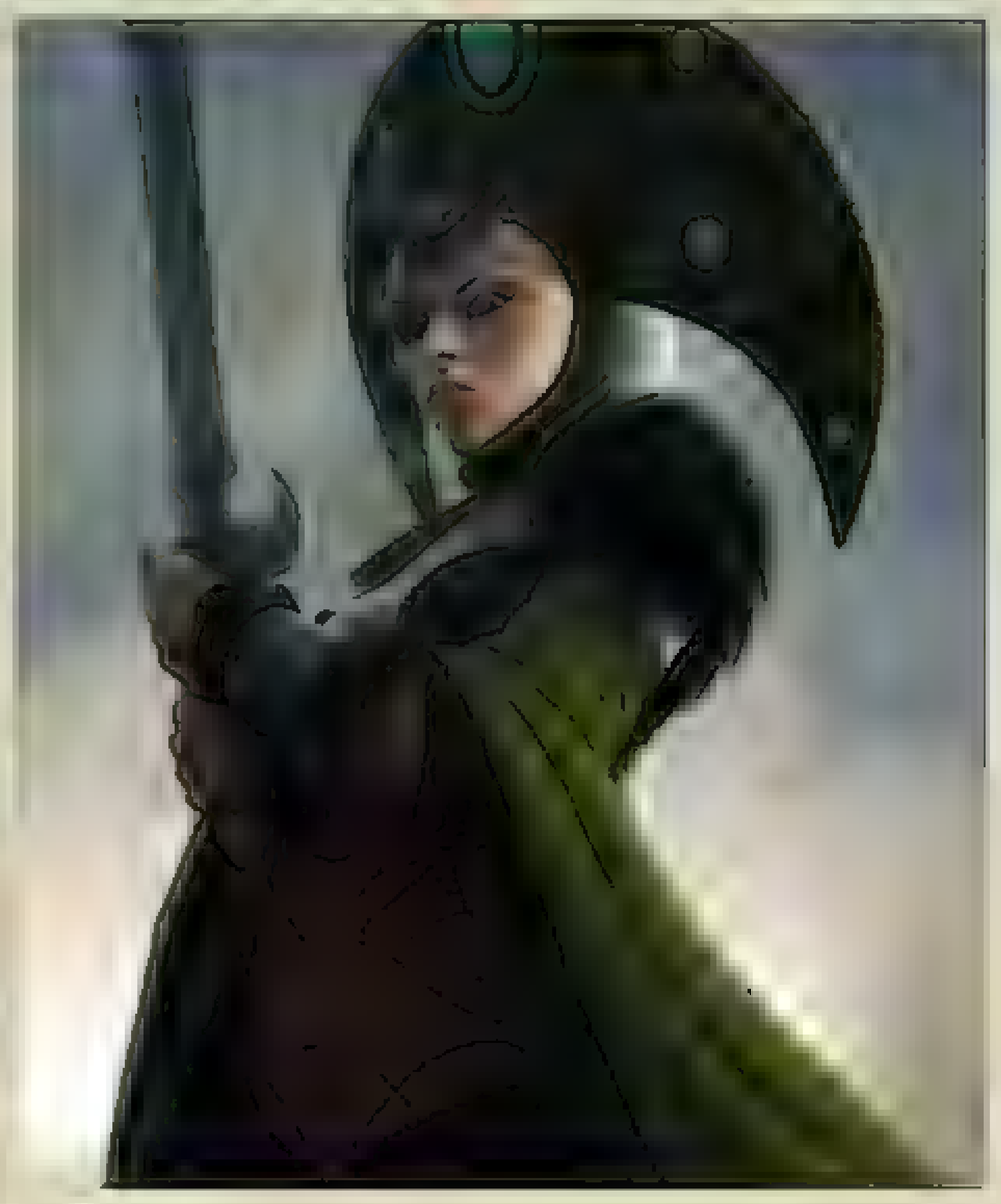
At this point I feel the arm nearest the viewer looks too long and too low. I cut out part of a hand and move it up. To add some interest to the suit I paint in some fur over the shoulder pads. This is very rough at the moment but by using the Smudge tool and rubbing back and forth across the brush strokes the fur will begin to take shape





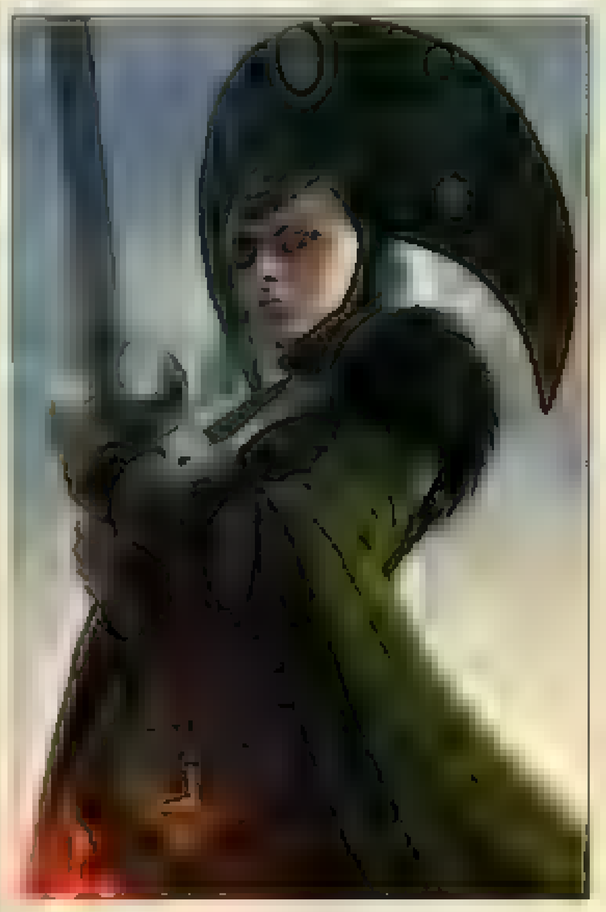
12 Tweaking the arm

The hand and arm still feels wrong so I reduce the length of the arm and pull the sword into her chest to lend it a sense of weight. As I do this, using a standard Round brush, I apply a pattern on her corset and to the armour, to add some visual interest.



13 Painting cloth

It's now time to start painting her cloak. As I paint I avoid symmetrical lines. I add the thinnest fold at the crease and use half-lock and zigzag shapes where the fold is tight, and long pipe shapes where the cloak goes loose and drops out. At the left edge I add blue colour as this part's in shadow, while on the right – the side that's in direct light – I use bright green and yellow shades.



PRO SECRETS

Don't rush to add colour

Carefully choosing your colours and the relations between them can greatly enhance your art. I prefer all my work to be kept in the same range and use only one or two bright accents.

14 Move in for the details

Up until now I've been painting loosely and zoomed out for the most part, but now I can begin to add detail. I begin by adding texture to the fabric using a custom brush, applying strokes in the same direction. I also use this on the headdress. For the sword I create a new noise texture and apply a Blur filter. I decide to dilute the blue and green tones of the picture with a bright orange colour. To achieve this I find a photo of a fire and paste it in the bottom corner, then add orange shades to her suit. Finally, I merge all the layers and pass over the entire picture with a small brush to paint in small details before adjusting Contrast and applying Sharpen.

Custom paper

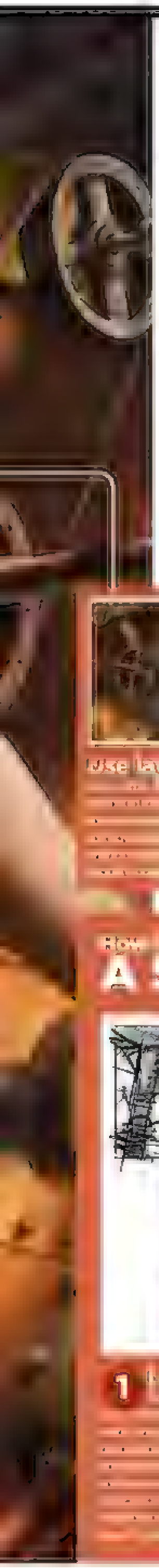
In Painter, the ability to configure a paper enables me to add depth to an otherwise plain surface while rendering, and this benefit is further enhanced when [illegible] brushes at different levels of opacity. By creating a Multiply layer, a shadow is added while retaining all the work created underneath.

The Glow brush

The Glow brush in Painter is brilliant. Careful use of it can enhance or manipulate a surface. In this case, light passing through. Through trial and error, [illegible]d to be one of the most important brushes in my toolset. It's great for those final touches.

Make revisions

At the sketch stage I thought it was cool to bring up some decorative ironworks, but as I look at the final image it occurs to me that it makes the image too busy and doesn't serve any purpose other than cluttering and moving the eye backwards, so I remove it.



Painter

INTRODUCE KEY STORY ELEMENTS

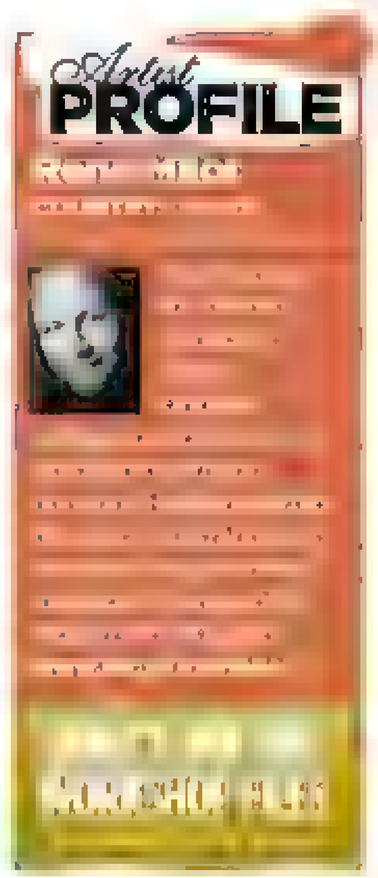
Employ the tricks of a traditional artist and give your fantasy scene added depth and visual interest. Rene Milot explains all



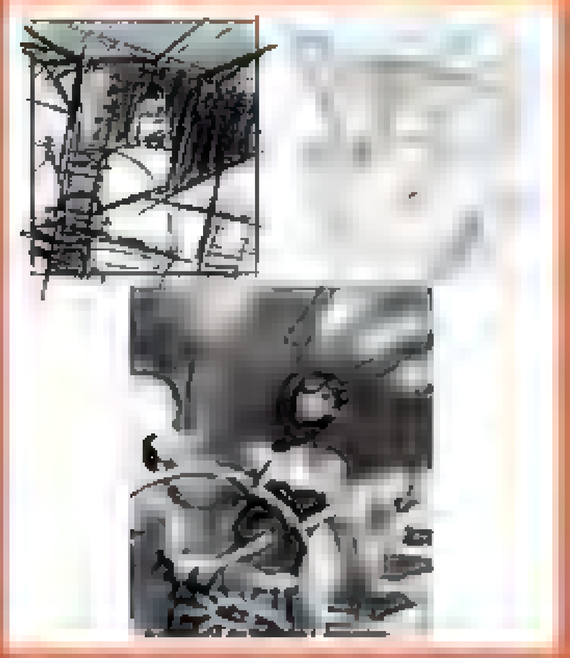
A few spare days between freelance assignments gives me the opportunity to combine several textures and story elements to create an interesting sci-fi environment, without revealing too much. I want to pull the viewer into the image by developing a focused narrative that's part of a bigger story. The viewer needs to make their own mind up on how the situation in the image came about, and how it'll end.

I've been painting in oils for over 25 years, and I found Painter to be the perfect tool for an oil painter to migrate to the digital medium. Even my doodles and thumbnails are done in Painter.

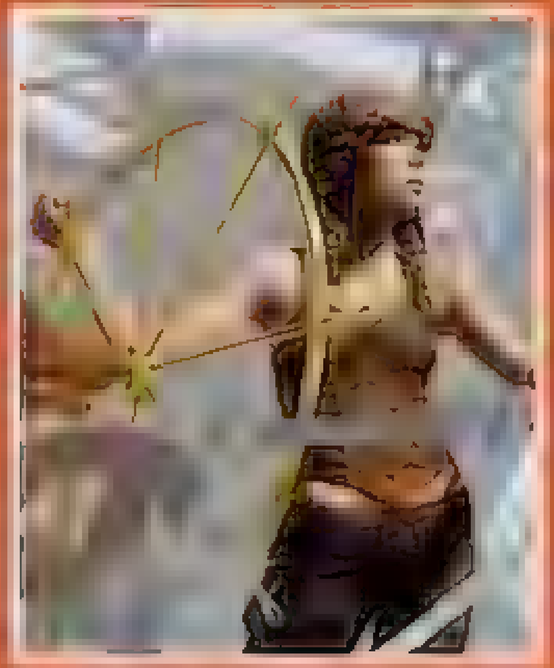
I approach the composition just like one reads a sentence: I want it to remain still without being stagnant. So I tilt the scene slightly and use diagonals to create a dynamic image, choosing material and elements that support the general theme. I use rivets, shiny and rusted metal, light and shade, and white flesh against grungy metal to add interest. It's similar to writing music: all the separate parts create a cohesive whole.



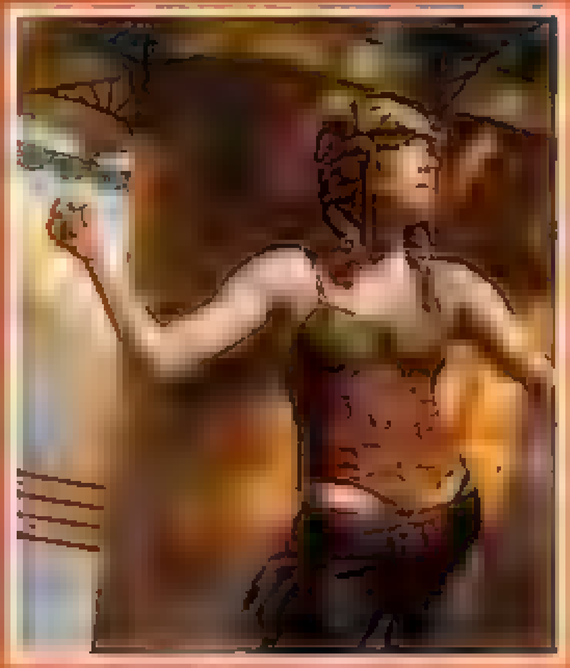
A STEAMPUNK AIRSHIP PILOT



1 Lay the groundwork



2 Start to paint



3 Final touches

Photoshop

UPDATE A CLASSIC FANTASY BEAST

Stefan Kopinski uses a minotaur's distinctive form to conceptualise clothing and machinery, and places it in an evocative environment

Artist PROFILE

Stefan Kopinski

COUNTRY: England



primarily for the games industry for various companies, including Games Workshop

www.stefankopinski.com

In this workshop I'll be taking you through a few of my usual steps to producing a character design, this one being a steampunk minotaur. Not only will I be designing the form of the mythical beast, I'll also be using the form to help design the typical mechanical elements that are commonly used in a steampunk setting.

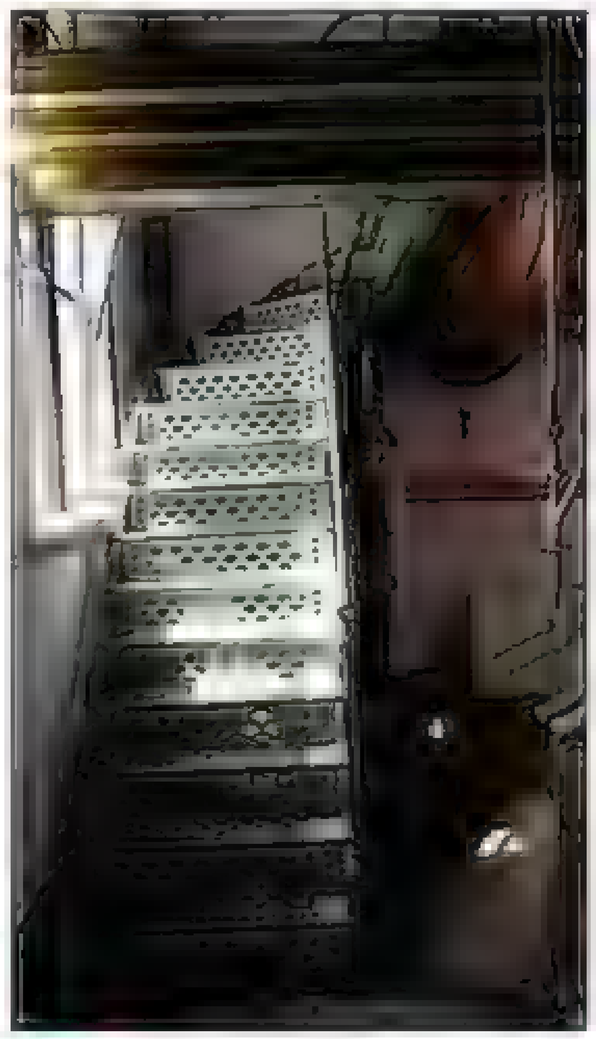
During my initial thought process, I considered what a huge beast could possibly be doing and how much machinery he could be carrying. The obvious answer was bulk and strength. A large, industrious spanner is his main tool, with the machinery strapped to him supplying the power to operate it.

However, as well as designing and creating these forms, I'll also look at setting a scene with an atmosphere of suspense through the use of depth and colour palette, leaving the viewer to conjure up the story behind the scene.

1 Initial sketch

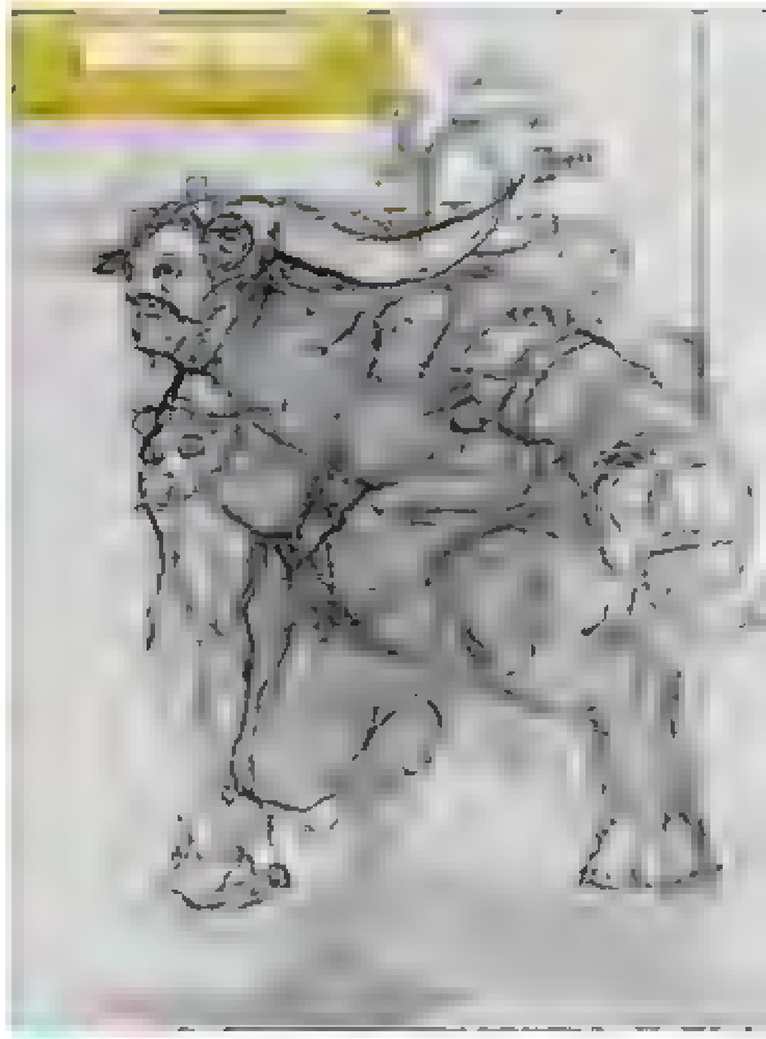
I start by considering the general form and pose for the character without any real attention to detail. I want him to be poised, but alerted to something in the mist, sniffing the air and listening intensely. I'm keen to convey the idea of this beast being a bit of a workhorse: intimidating, but slightly unpredictable. The idea that he could stand his ground or bolt would add to the suspense. Keeping the basic lines and shading very loose enables me to visualise my idea and quickly get the right feel.





2 Collecting references

Once I have a strong idea in my head I refer to my extensive reference library, which unsurprisingly comprises images grabbed from the internet together with a few choice shots taken for specific jobs. The more reference material you have for the job, the easier it becomes. In addition, references help you retain information, making the initial ideas stages easier to realise. For this workshop I take photographs of the interior of Papplewick Pumping Station, which is a restored Victorian, steam-powered water pump.



3 Line time!

I often use the initial sketch to get things started. This helps me keep the loose feel that can be lost when tackling the details. I drag the sketch into Photoshop, reduce the Opacity to about 10 per cent so as not to dictate too much form, and then produce the line drawing on a layer above. I often add a low-opacity texture layer underneath both these layers to introduce some atmosphere. After concentrating on the minotaur's form, I introduce steampunk elements as and when they make sense. This way I manage to keep a sense of logic to the concept.

PRO SECRETS

Happy accidents



4 Tone and lighting

Once the general line work is done and the majority of the form in place, I consider the lighting. This will then depict the entire form. I want the lighting to be a diffused spotlight, as if there were a single bulb, in the steam, out of shot. Placing it top right and out of shot not only sets the scene as a little confined, with the added suspense of poor visibility, but focuses on the mechanical and decorative details on the shoulder and spanner. Leaving large areas in shade will produce a strong overall shape, while less-detailed areas will enhance the lit focal point. At this point, tonally, I also concentrate on the structural mass of the form in preparation for the rendering

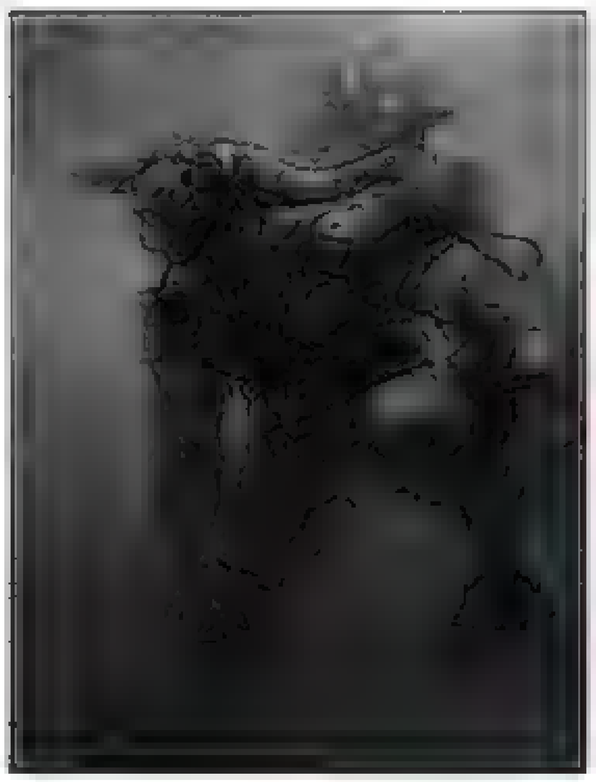
5 Adding colour

generate more mood by adding the base colour to the background. I want this to be a thick, steamy, polluted environment. Using a Hue/Saturation Adjustment layer, I check Colorize to choose my background colour. This is placed between the lines and the tonal layers beneath. I then merge down the tonal layers into one background layer, and introduce a wash of colour to the character above the line layer. Using an Overlay layer and a brush with Opacity set around 50 per cent with pressure sensitivity, I introduce the basic colours of the skin tones, leather and metal, ready to start rendering. The choice of colour here is intentional to allow just enough difference between the character and its background



6 Let the fun begin!

The majority of my work is based around a traditional approach to painting with the occasional mask or adjustment layer. I believe there's more to learn from studying every aspect in a painting. With this in mind, I'm now effectively laying on the paint quite thick; in digital terms, about 80 per cent Opacity, but still with Pressure Sensitivity activated. The image itself acts as my palette and I sample straight from it, adjusting colours in the colour palette or the tool bar, which in turn adds to my palette





7 Go from big to small

As with all rendering, I'll always start with a fairly big brush to get the form right and work my way down to a fine brush for the details. With steampunk imagery, it's easy to get sucked into the detail too quickly. Again, successful and convincing design comes from getting the form right first

8 Logical elements

On this image I have a decorative plate on the shoulder pad. The idea behind this is to stop the horns from interfering with the machinery as well as protecting the head. The steam engine on his back is to power the massive spanner, and the mask is based on a World War I gas mask. I want to convey a feeling of weight to the machinery and my initial idea was that a beast of this size would be well suited to operate such equipment. Getting this sense of weight relied heavily on getting large forms down first before adding the decorative elements. The more time you put into the preparatory stages the easier and more fun the rendering will be later on





9 Brushwork

I often only use one main brush and a couple of texture brushes. My main brush is a tweaked oil pastel. This is used for sketching and rendering and can be reduced to quite a sharp brush for fine detailing. The smoothness of this brush enables me to push the paints around to form the correct block shapes, yet has enough of an edge for sharper forms. It works well with the Mixer Brush tool for blending, again if I want to create a smooth surface to apply details to. The rest of the brushes are custom brushes that I've made for mist and fog and general dirge. Where possible I will make my brushstrokes follow the contours of the shape. This helps enhance any level of foreshortening that may occur



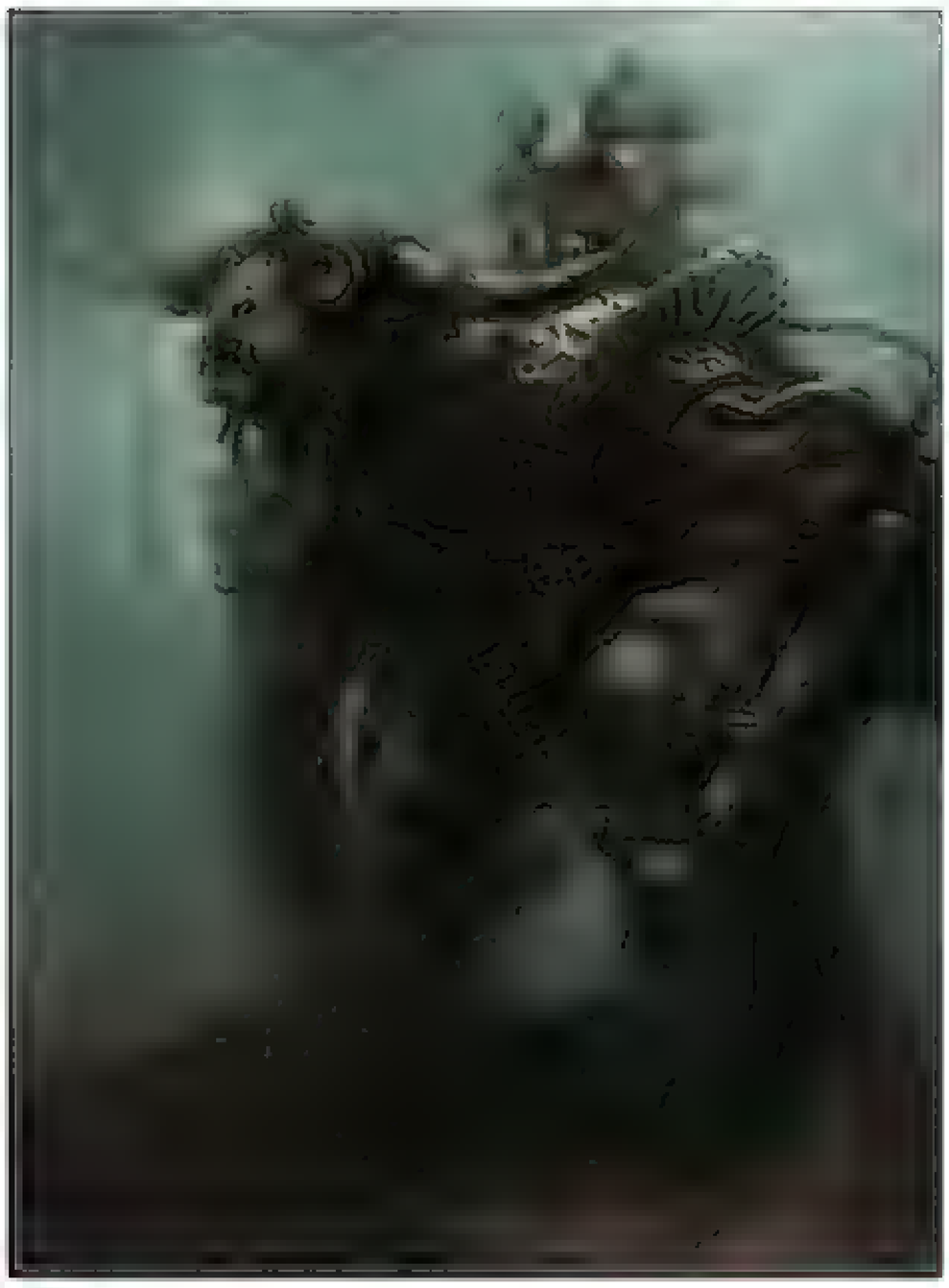
10 Colour adjustment

After the bulk of the rendering is done, I apply a further colour wash above the rendering layer. I use a Color layer with very light brushstrokes. This layer enables me to pull out and strengthen elements of the character. Generally warmer hues help pull objects forward, while cooler hues push backwards



11 Emphasise the design

I use warm colours to pull the leather and brass layers of the steampunk design forward, as well as areas of the minotaur such as his nose and knuckles. This is done subtly, so as not to lose the overall misty atmosphere. Using the complementary colours of subtle oranges and reds over the cyan based background gives the character just enough lift. At this point I tend to do a little more rendering using the adjusted pallet, to complete the overall look of the character



12 Adding atmosphere

When I'm happy with my minotaur I start to finalise the image by adding mist and textures to the image and hint at an industrious background to help with the steampunk theme. I fade the extremities of the character into its background using my texture brushes. Not only does this contribute to the feel of the thick misty atmosphere by breaking up the outline of the character and exaggerating the depth, but it also emphasises the focal point of the image.

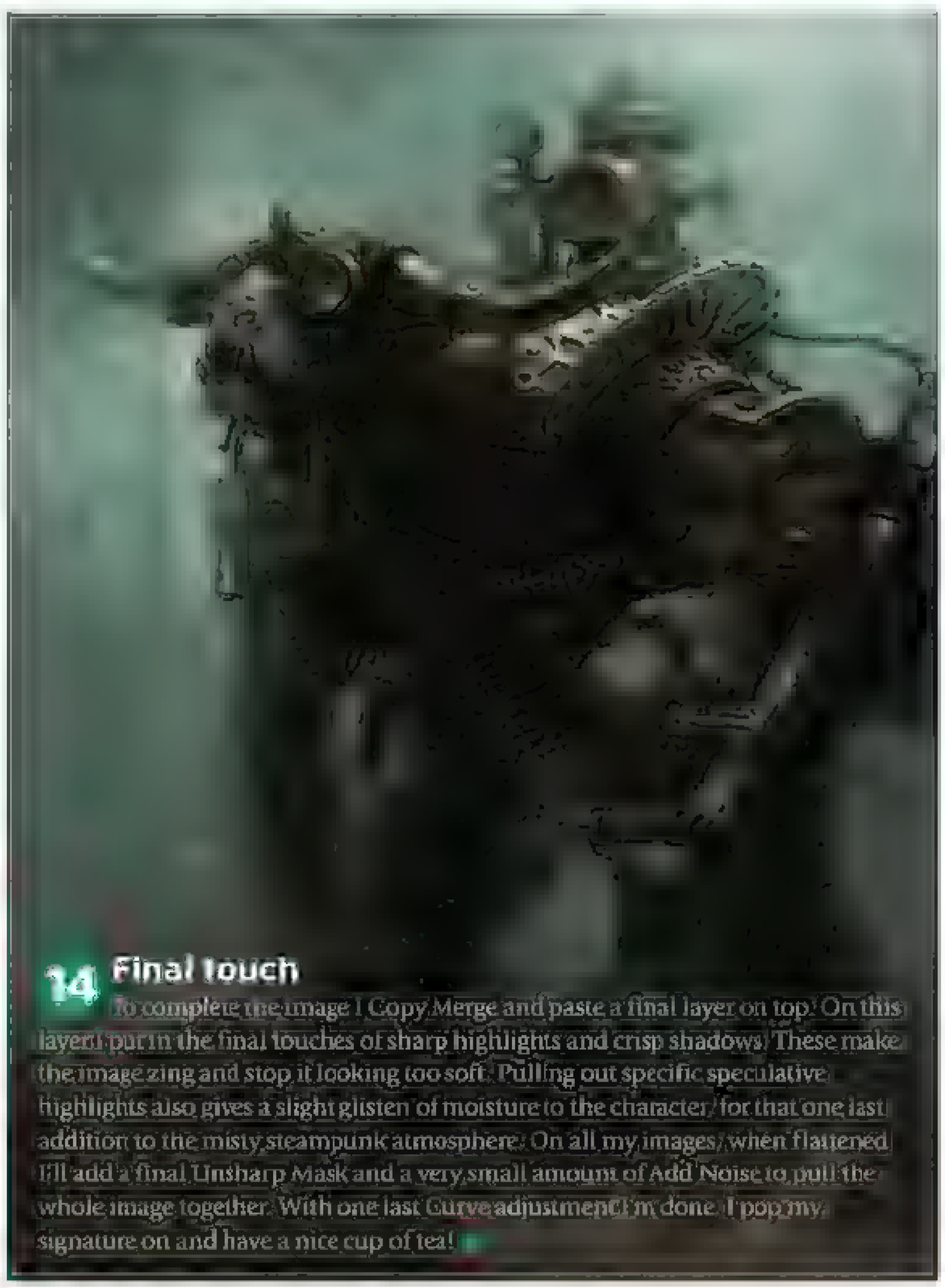
PRO SECRETS

Check your tones

You can make sure your tones are correct by either starting an image in greyscale or adding a Black and White Adjustment layer as your top layer. This is important for getting the right level of punch to your piece.

13 Make it pop

I wanted a final lift to make the character pop from its background a little more, so I introduce a Curves Adjustment layer to the whole image, ensuring that the Auto adjustment is working well. I use the Adjustment layer's mask to introduce this final boost by means of inverting the mask painting in the result using white



14 Final touch

To complete the image I Copy Merge and paste a final layer on top. On this layer I put in the final touches of sharp highlights and crisp shadows. These make the image zing and stop it looking too soft. Pulling out specific speculative highlights also gives a slight glisten of moisture to the character, for that one last addition to the misty steampunk atmosphere. On all my images, when flattened I'll add a final Unsharp Mask and a very small amount of Add Noise to pull the whole image together. With one last Curve adjustment I'm done. I pop my signature on and have a nice cup of tea!

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INSPIRATION

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Next month in...

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX

Paint to a new tune

Discover new techniques to draw and paint better human anatomy with **Charles Hu**

Also

Depict muscle and skin

Comic and Disney artist John Watkiss explains how to draw the male body.

Paint with beams of light

Howard Lyon reveals how to light a figure for dramatic effect, using Corel Painter.

Master the art of colour

Discover how to use colour creatively in your figure painting, with Bianca Draghici.

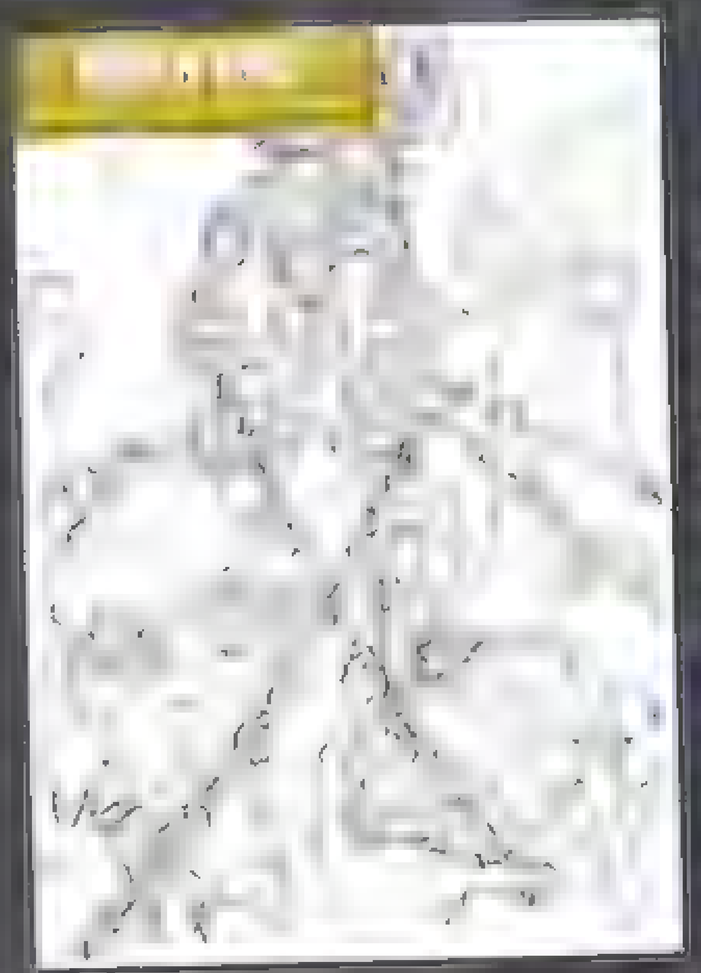
Illustrate faces the easy way

Portrait painter Corrado Vanelli demonstrates he how paints facial features.

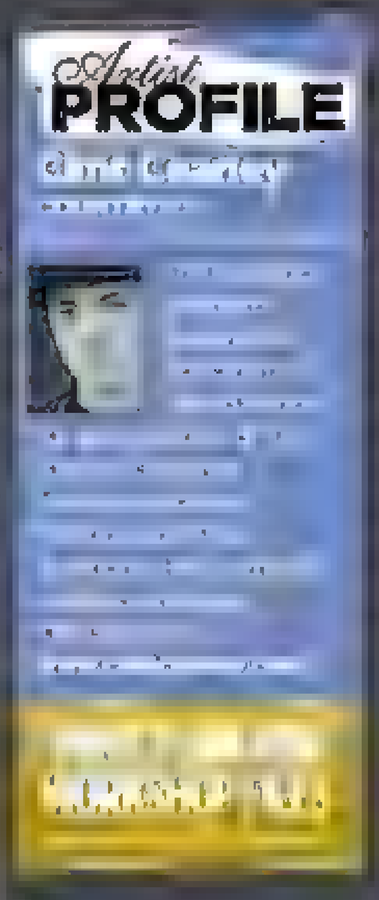
ISSUE 94 ON SALE *FRIDAY 1 MARCH 2013*

PAINT A MACABRE STEAMPUNK FIGURE

An old idea is brought back to life n[illegible] hands as he paints a necromancer with steampunk trappings while using a cold colour palette

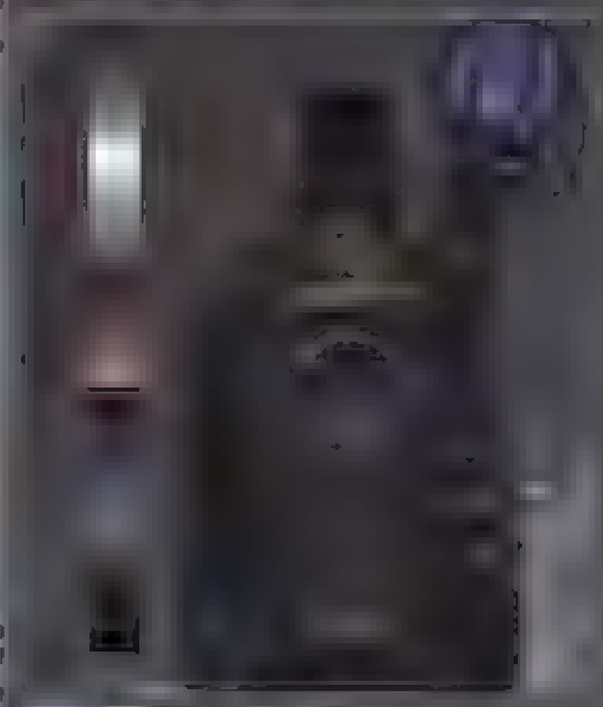


Steampunk is a wonderful genre where modern technology and styles wrapped in a brass-obsessed Victorian aesthetic. But since it isn't my normal subject I begin by collecting reference images. I have no intention of copying them but they help get my mind in the right frame and bring me to my first critical decision. Did I want to paint a sexy gal in a corset (a steampunk staple) or something different? I choose different and instead revisit an idea and composition I had begun years ago. The character in the old sketch had a large metal collar, which sparked the idea that his replacement would be a necromancer whose corrupt power was forcing him to replace parts of his body with machinery. The image would revolve on the concept of death – tombstones and skeletons, which in turn symbolise flirting with death through magic. I don't expect the viewer to get all this; it's more important for me to understand it so I know what this image is going to be about.



1 Designing the scene

I sketch the scene in pencil, with the main character, skeletons and chains sketched separately (after testing thumbnail versions). I scan and compile them into a layered file in Photoshop. The composition is simple, with the character centred and design elements pointing towards him (chains, skeletons and background girder crossing his chest).



2 Establishing the colours

Putting the sketch layers into a group, I set its Blending Mode to Multiply and create a Normal layer underneath. Here I begin blocking in the colour using a large Round brush.

3 The palette

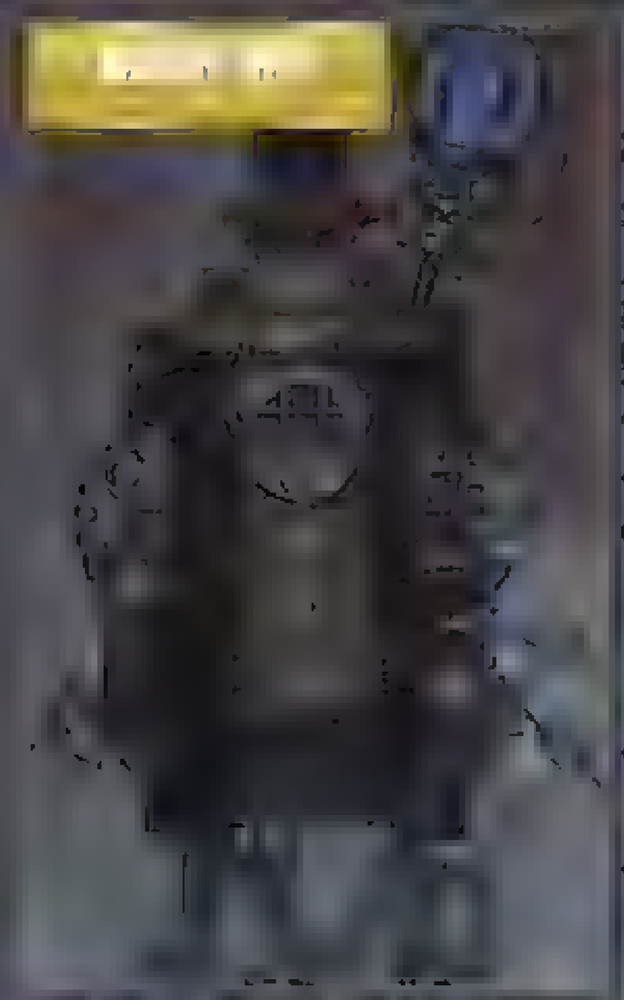
I sample the colours from a palette I create on a top layer. The colours chosen are cold and subdued to reflect the scene's subject. Red was originally picked as the main accent colour but I change it to blue because red is too natural and warm.



4 Setting the value scheme

I'm keen to establish a simple and effective value scheme in this initial stage. For example, here I'm showing the same image desaturated and filtered with a Smart Blur. Even in this simplified version the scene is understandable and the character stands out. It's important that all lights and shadows added later stay near the value that I've established for its area, otherwise the value scheme will be undermined.





5 Continue to block in the image

I move on to blocking in the colours of the necromancer's elements, as well as the surrounding cloth. While not aiming for photorealism I make a point of differentiating the surface qualities between the brass, steel and clothes. Wanting the character to stand out even more, I brighten the background behind him so his contour has greater contrast.



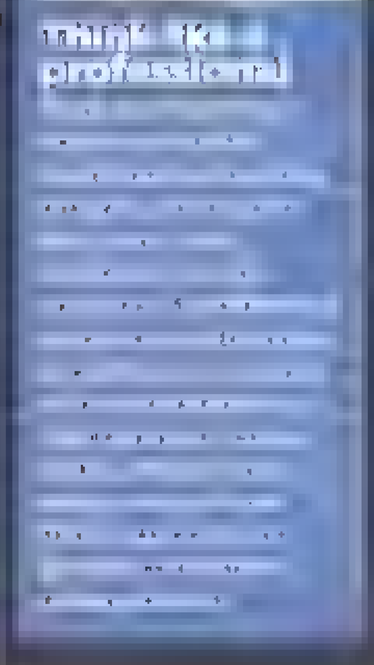
Brightening the fog

With the way the character is developing I feel confident I can lighten the lower fog without distracting from him. I'm careful to lighten it only a little, still staying far away from pure white.

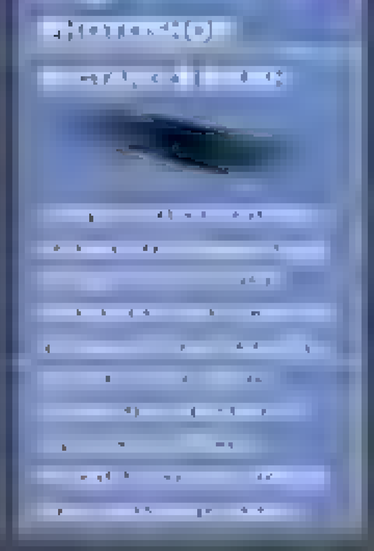
Darkening the sky

I notice a compositional problem with the lower half of the image, directing the eye upwards, and nothing at the top to dissuade it from leaving the image. I decide to resolve the problem by darkening the top of the image.

PRO SECRETS

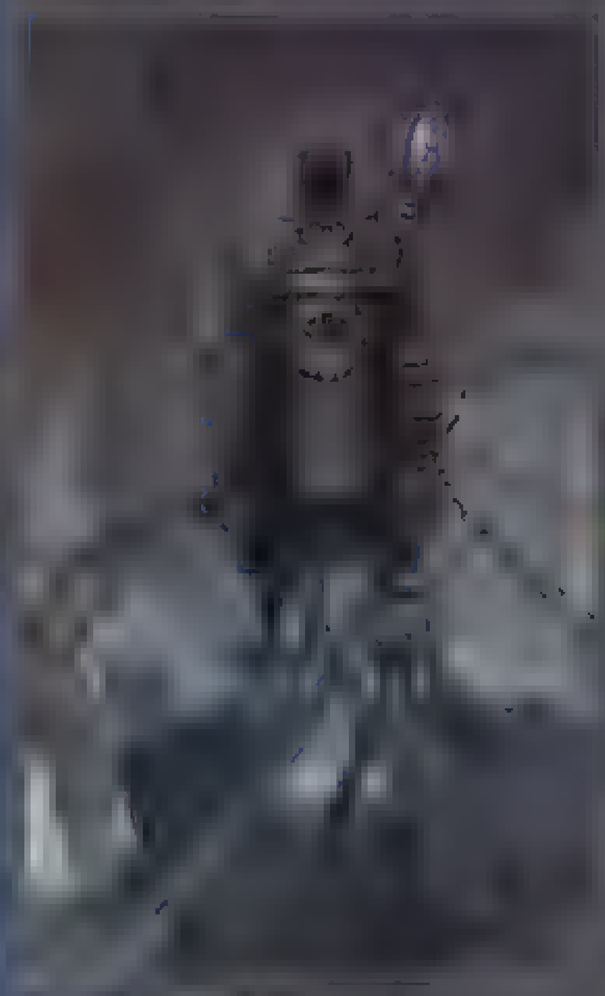


WORKSHOP BRUSHES



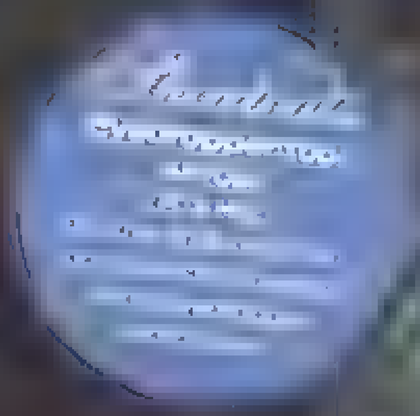
Adjusting the positioning

Pulling out from the image, I feel there's a bit too much space at the bottom, so I shift the entire image down, which gives the character more room above his head. The arm on the right is pulled out around the elbow to better mirror the contour of the other arm.



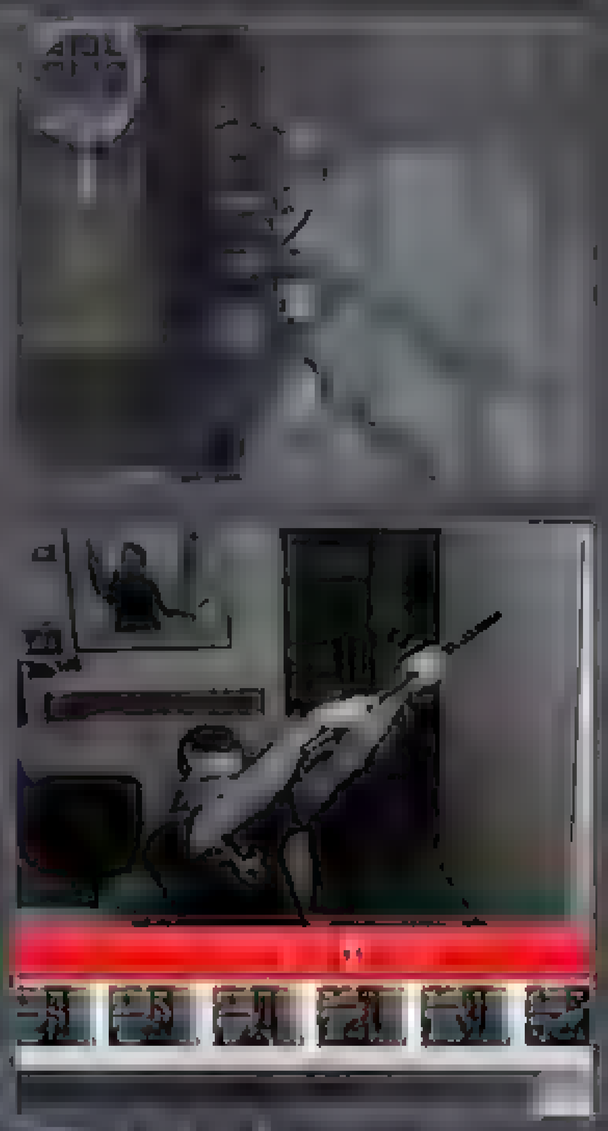
9 Checking the alignments

Turning on the grid, I notice that the horizontal alignment of the eyes is tilt up to one side, which I easily correct with Edit>Transform.



10 Painting the pipes

Moving to the background, I refine the pipes on the left side but stay careful to keep their detail toward the highlights on a short value range so they don't compete with any of the foreground elements.



11 Self-reference

Wanting reference for the skeleton hands and poses I use my iMac's Photo Booth program to snap some quick references. I pull these images up in Photoshop, add them as new layers and [illegible] to sketch from. They serve as the only direct photo reference used during the painting.



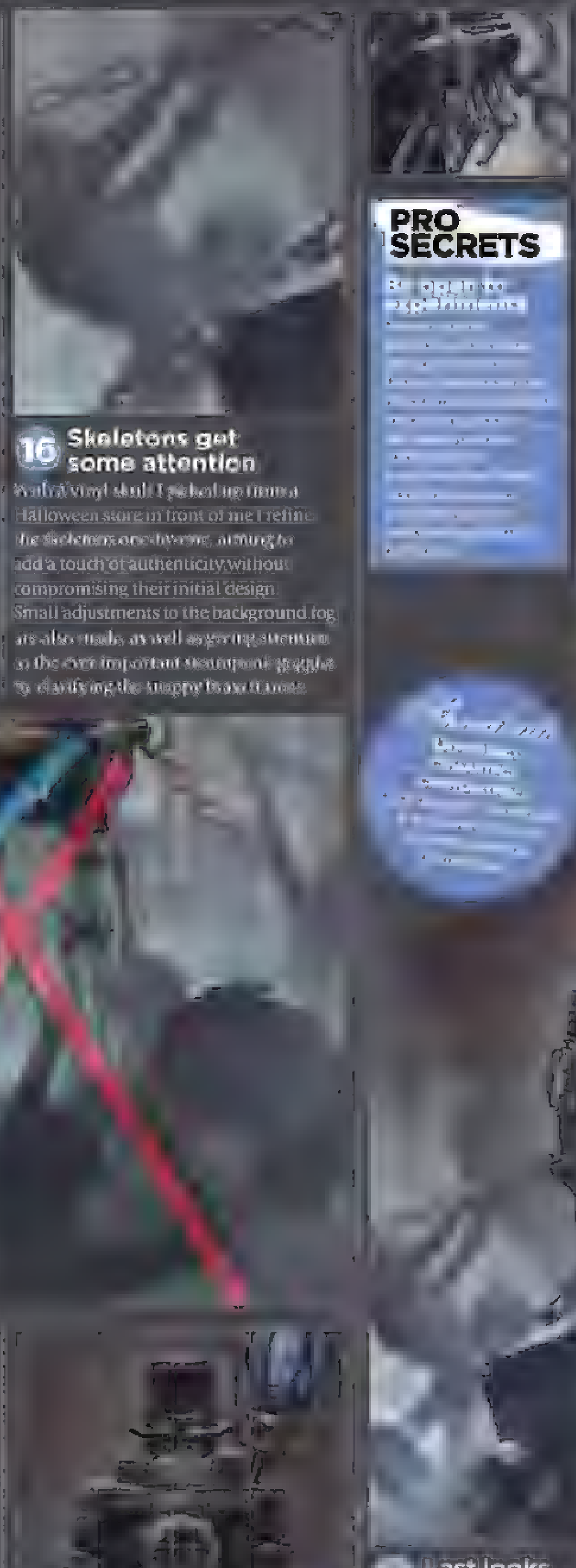
12 Let it snow

Browsing online, I notice a photo of a wolf dusted in snow, which gives the wonderful portrait an added magic and I decide to add the same to my image. It's a logical addition to explain the cold colour scheme and the background fading into grey. One layer is added for the falling snow, which is created with a standard Round brush set to Scatter with Size Jitter, and a second layer for snow that has collected on surfaces.



13 Adding variation

Using the Smudge tool, I drag flakes in varying degrees to convey movement. I then paint a handful of large flakes out of focus to indicate those closer to the camera.

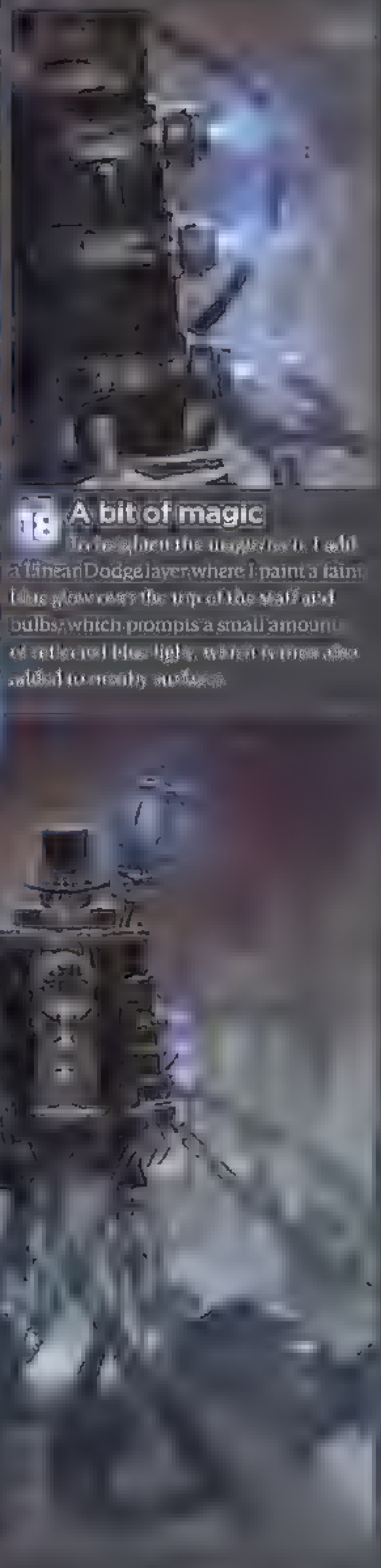


16 Skeletons get some attention

With a vinyl skull I picked up from a Halloween store in front of me I refine the skeleton, once more, aiming to add a touch of authenticity without compromising their initial design. Small adjustments to the background fog are also made, as well as paying attention to the ever important silhouette profile by clarifying the snappy bow tie area.

17 Handy work

I initially thought to have one hand withered and the other gloved, but I change my mind and make the other a mechanical clamp instead.



18 A bit of magic

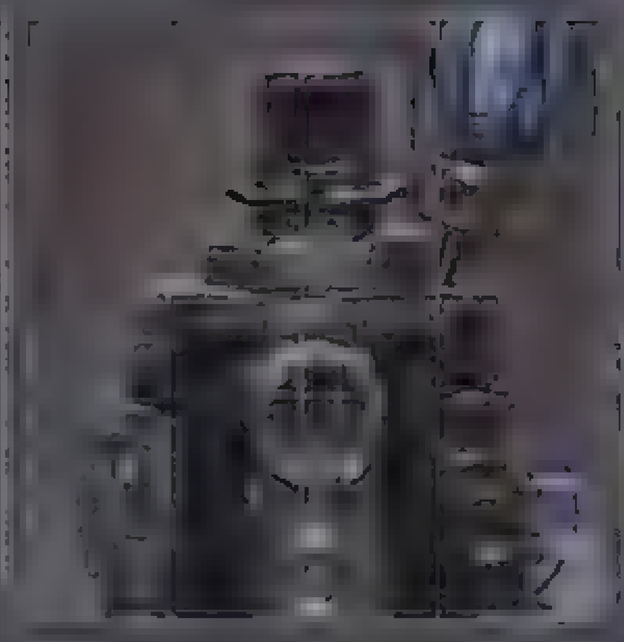
To brighten the magic orb, I add a Linear Dodge layer where I paint a faint blue glow over the top of the staff and bulbs, which prompts a small amount of ethereal blue light, which is then also added to nearby surfaces.

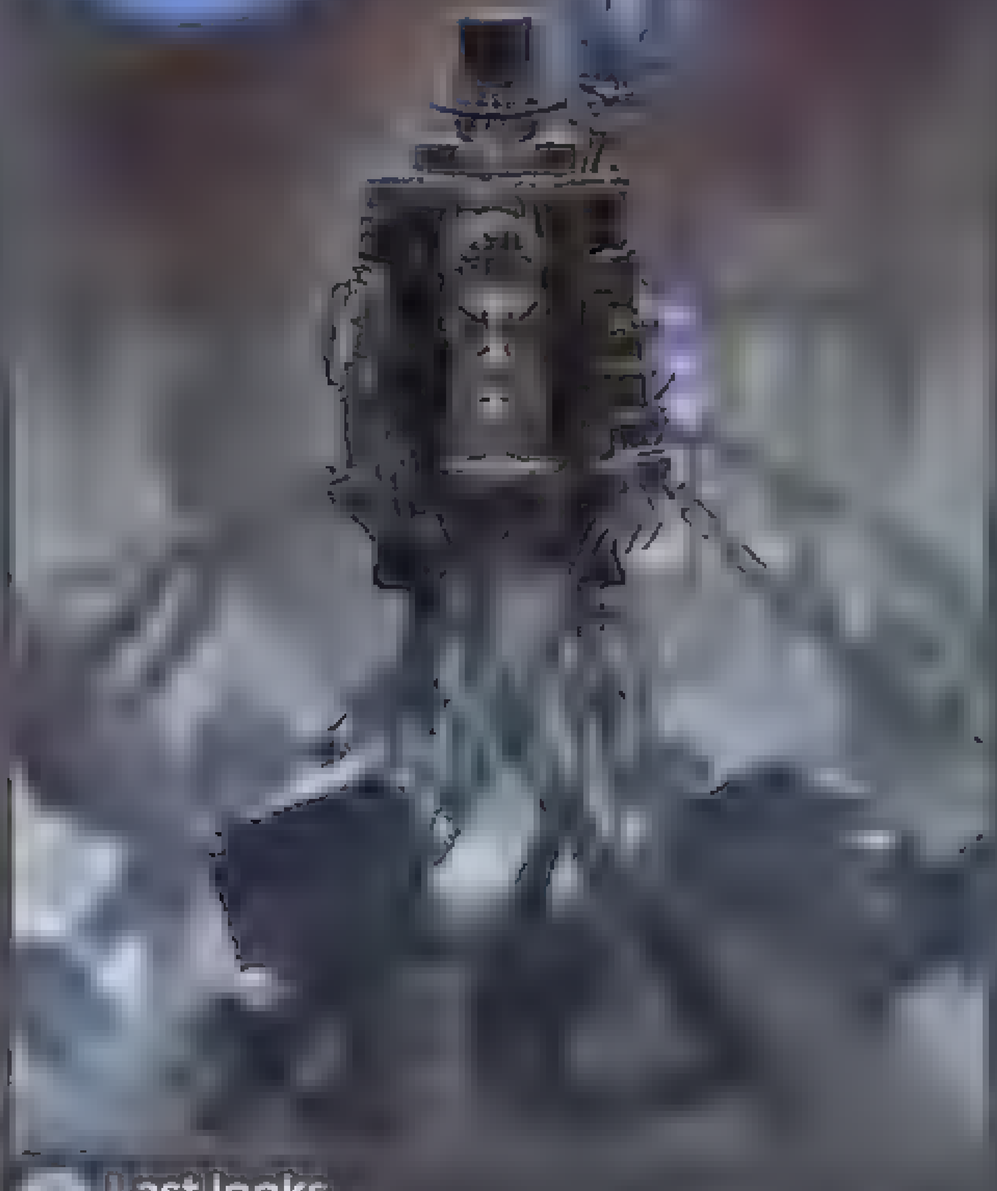
14 Chain and pipes

A second chain is added on the front to break up the perfect X pattern made by the two current chains. The pipes on the right side are then painted.

15 Centreing the figure

Flipping the scene horizontally to help spot mistakes, I notice that the end figure isn't perfectly centred. In this case he needs to be clearly off centre or perfectly centred, and I choose the latter, which requires moving the entire image slightly to the left.





19 Last looks

Now all there is left to do is run a mild Smart Sharpen filter over a flattened version of the image to add a little bit more and subtly for effect, we have an environment already to watch the cold steampunk world.

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ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award
Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award.

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...



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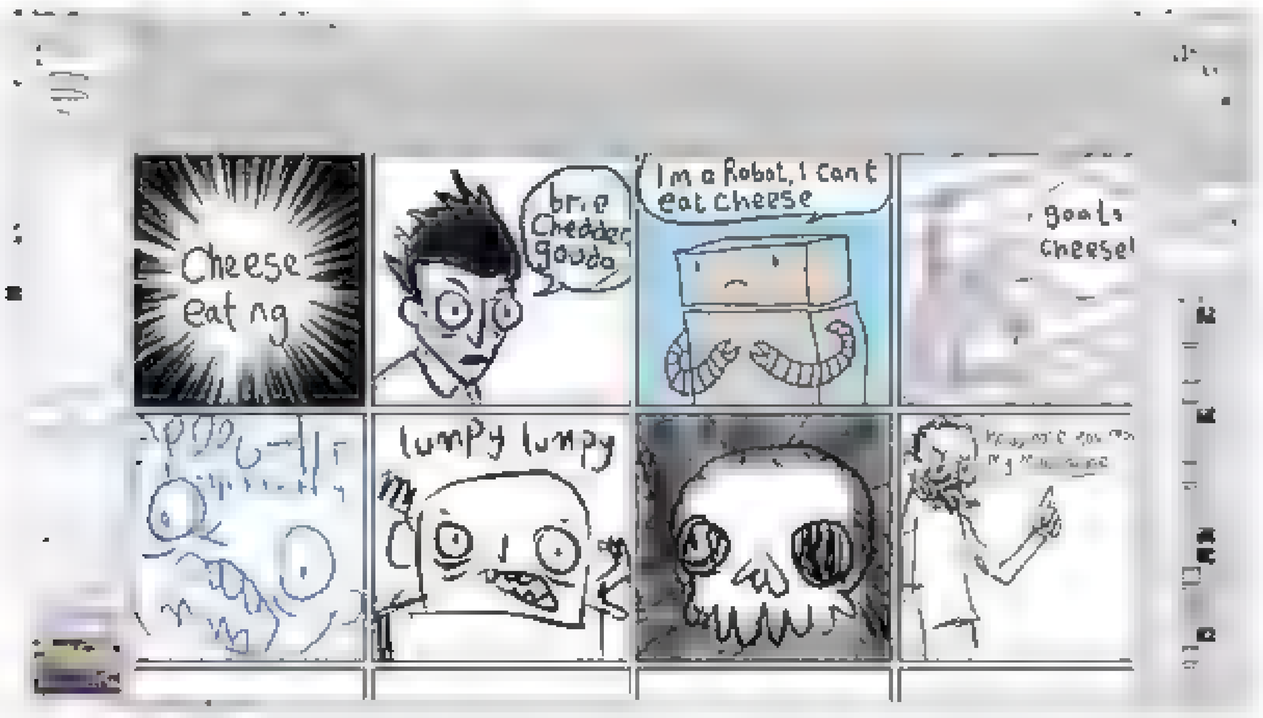


RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Good Ordinary Poor Atrocious

storemags.com

Comic artist Emma Vitelli uses Smith Micro's Manga Studio. She created this aquatic-themed painting in the software.





Comic artist Matt Boyce uses Manga Studio and is impressed by the new painting and colouring tools at his disposal in this latest edition.

Manga Studio 5

FIVE STAR Look past the interface and you'll find plenty of reasons to buy the new version of this drawing app

Price	Company	Web	Contact

Despite its rather singular name, Manga Studio's versatility stretches far beyond Japanese-style comics. It's quickly established itself alongside the likes of Photoshop and Painter in digital artists' software suites. It's hugely powerful, reasonably cheap and packed with really nifty, comic-specific features.

2009's Manga Studio 4 came in two flavours: the stripped-back but still great Debut version, and the more professional EX version. This year's Manga Studio 5 packs in some of the features of EX4, but there's a more fully fledged EX5 due out later this year. Manga Studio 5 will cost $80 (£49) cheaper than Photoshop Elements and Corel Painter Lite.

The biggest aesthetic change from Manga Studio 4 is the interface. Gone are the floating Windows 95-esque menus and effects in favour of Photoshop-style dockable panels for essentials such as pencil types, brush sizes and – importantly – the colour palette. It's a big improvement, but you'll find that your workspace shrinks to a miniscule size if you're running it on a small monitor with all panels open.

Brushes have also been vastly improved over Manga Studio 4. Previously, custom brushes had to be painstakingly built and installed, but version 5 puts them all straight into the software. Watercolours and oil brushes are available, and they look natural and convincing.

The coolest and most useful addition to Manga Studio 5 are the 3D posable models. They're tucked away in the software's numerous options (you'll find them under Window>Material>Material [3D]), but they're as good as any models you'd find in Poser. Each limb can be manipulated and the model can be rotated to give you the perfect pose. From here you can trace its outline safe in the knowledge your drawing will be anatomically correct.

Add to this Manga Studio 5's built-in perspective rulers and you've got all the tools you need to create immersive panels and artworks. In fact, the 3D engine is so comprehensive we could see entire comics being created using it and it alone.

There are a couple of misgivings. It's built on an entirely new engine, which gives it its powerful effects, but also negates backwards compatibility. At time of writing it's available as a physical shipment only, too, which feels a little archaic. These are minor quibbles, though. Manga Studio 5 is a huge improvement on what was already a great piece of software.

> **Manga Studio 5 is a huge improvement on what was already a great piece of software**

DETAILS

System Requirements
PC: Windows XP/
Rating

MATT BOYCE

Our resident comic strip artist talks Manga Studio

What made you choose Manga Studio over, say, Photoshop or Corel Painter?
I've been using Manga Studio EX 4 to create my comic strips for about two years now. It's the best package around for comic creation. Its pen and ink tools respond similarly to the pens and brushes I've been using when I work directly on paper. It's really good for drawing; the tools are more fluid than other packages for my line of work, and chock full of different rulers and panel layout tools. Because of that, it speeds up my workflow massively.

Have you noticed a big difference between Manga Studio 4 and 5?
In many ways it's a very different program and quite hard to compare. The layout of the workspace has changed; all the windows have been integrated into one screen so you're not messing about with as many floating panels. The colouring and painting tools have been improved significantly. I found them weak in EX4 and stuck to colouring my work mostly in Photoshop, whereas now they work a lot better.

What are your favourite new features?
The nicest addition is the improved Frame Cutter tool. When laying out a page it divides up the different panels into individual Layer Masks. This makes it easier to keep your work in each layer separate and will speed up your workflow.

And are there any features you'd like to see added?
More tools that focus on creating multiple sequential pages would be a big bonus. I'm also curious to see how this works with the Tab Mate Controller that was released in Japan. I'd like to see a dark window mode, too – I believe the Japanese version has this already.



Matt teaches people how to create comics, and produces the webcomic Boy+Bear as well as Imaginefx's own strip.

www.mattboyce.com

Photoshop Touch

Android & iPad

TOUCH 'N' GO Can the most popular image editor keep pace with the rapidly growing tablet market?

Price: £6.99 Company: Adobe Web: www.adobe.com Contact: @Adobe

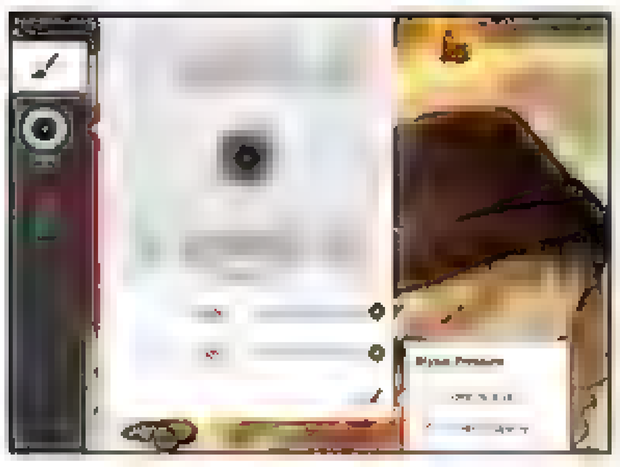
Optimised for smaller tablets, such as the iPad mini and Nexus 7, Photoshop Touch is instinctive and easy to use, even at a smaller screen size, thanks to its simple, stylish interface and familiar tools and layout.

If you're new to the world of Adobe on a tablet, it's quick to master with its simple tutorials and logical layout. For existing Adobe users it's easy to adapt to (although it may take time to undo established habits).

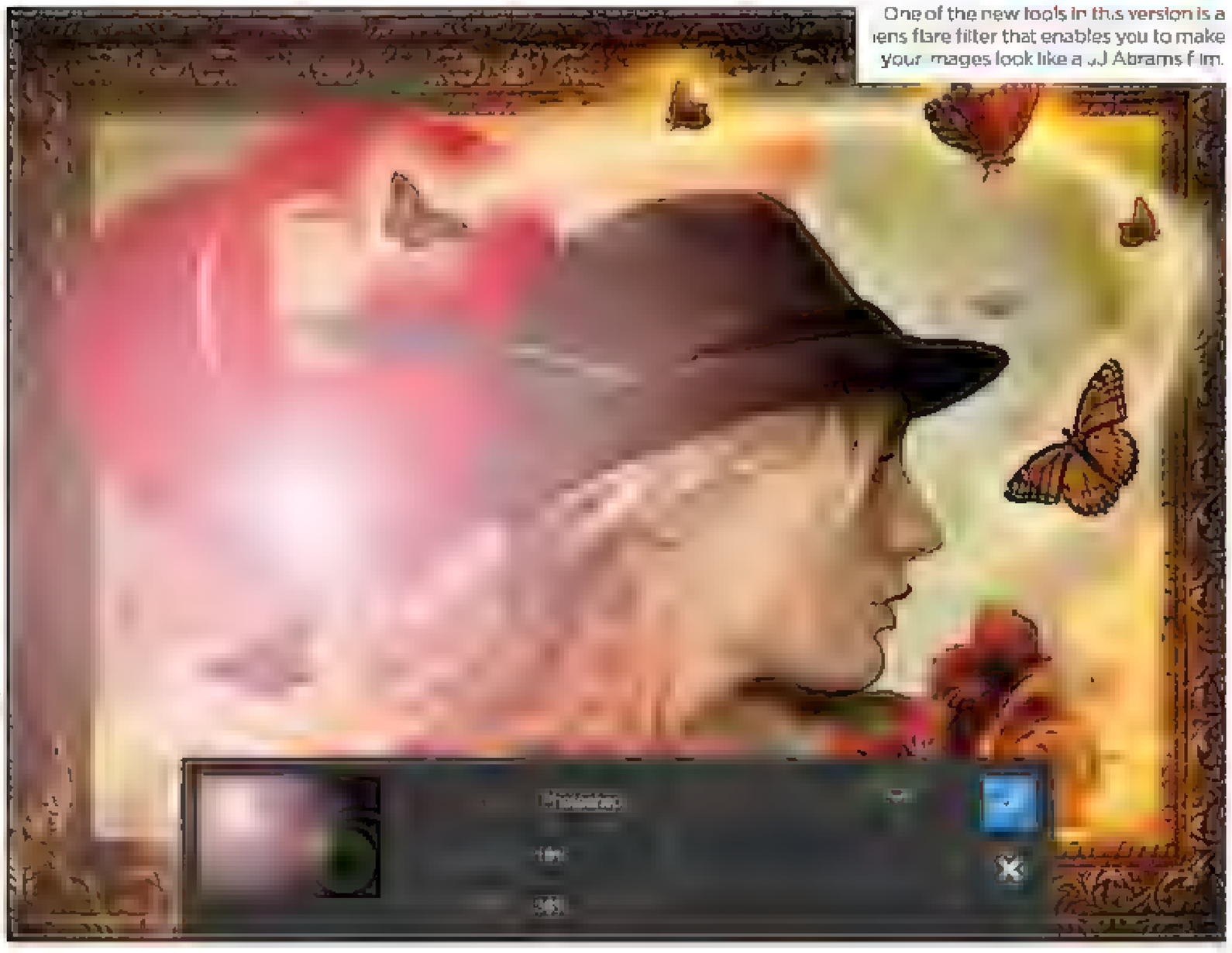
Along with optimised performance for smaller tablets, Touch now supports the new generation of pressure-sensitive styluses such as the Pogo Connect and Jot Touch. Although it's not primarily a painting app, the added subtlety this brings when painting in areas of photos or erasing selections helps give your work another level of sophistication.

One especially neat touch is that you can set the stylus pressure to alter either the size or opacity of your brush (or both) depending on the type of stroke you want. This is a great way to personalise your brushes rather than rely on a default which may not be as you want it.

Although the software is free for existing Photoshop Touch users at £6.99 this app isn't cheap and lacks some high-end features that would help justify the price tag. It supports images up to 12MP, but there's still no support for RAW images, and with canvas sizes limited to a maximum of Retina's screen dimensions (1,536x2,048) then there's still not much flexibility for digital artists. You also can't import fonts, as you can in apps like ArtStudio, and so you're limited to the default.



You can edit your brush settings to take advantage of the new pressure sensitive styluses



One of the new tools in this version is a lens flare filter that enables you to make your images look like a JJ Abrams film.

DETAILS

Price: Free (PLE edition)
Company: e-on Software
Web: www.e-onsoftware.com
RATING: ✍✍✍✍

Create vistas with the same features as the main app, but outputting and sharing are restricted



Vue Infinite 11 PLE

FREE APP Make your 3D nature scenes even more dynamic

Price: Free (PLE edition)
Company: e-on Software
Web: www.e-onsoftware.com
RATING: ✍✍✍✍

Featuring the same comprehensive tool set as the main app, this Public Learning Edition is a standalone version of e-on's 3D landscape generator. It features all you need to create stunning vistas, without the cost of the app, and features the same tools, including new features such as EcoParticles. The only restrictions are watermarked final renders and files that can only be used in other PLE editions.

You can create images with relative ease thanks to the comprehensive collection of preloaded textures and models. However, if you're new to the app you'll find the learning curve very steep and the support files consist of YouTube videos, so be prepared to invest plenty of time.

Once familiar with the complex and fiddly interface, Infinite is a delight. New features such as the 360 population tool, enable you to fill landscapes with detail. Snow and rain options make images come to life at the click of a button. Yet they're better suited for those using Infinite as an animation tool, rather than a still life generator, because they look best in extreme close up.



New options for snow and rain enable you to change the climate in an instant



Google Nexus 10

TOP 10 This 's Google's most impressive tablet to date – bJt does it de lver for digital artists?

Price	Company	Web
Contact		

Google's attempts to take on Apple in the tablet arena continue unabated with the Nexus 10. At 10 inches it's the bigger brother of the seven-inch Nexus 7, and more in line with Apple's iPad. Google has crammed it with impressive features while keeping the price below an iPad.

Those extra three nches over the Nexus 7 make a big d fference here, and they're l um nated by a ot of extra p xe s some four m l on n tota ts 2 560 by 1,600 resolut on is sl ghtly h gher than the fourth generat on Pad, and a most double a standard h def telev sion set The result s an mpress vely crisp disp ay that's perfect for v ew ng high-qua ity art on the web or watching h gh def n tion v deos

Powerng this mini behemoth of a d sp ay s a dua core processor and a ded cated graphics chip, wh ch resu t n a smooth user experience t runs the atest Android operating system, wh ch ncludes fun and useful features such as Goog e Now, w th custom sed 'cards' based on your Goog e history, and a clever 360 degree panoram c camera function

For entertainment and the nternet t's a versat le a l rounder then When it comes to art though, t s a ttle acking in features There's none of the touchscreen sensitiv ty that made the s mi ar y Andro d-powered Samsung Galaxy Note (rev ewed in ssue 90) such a tempting prospect for d gital artists, and Adonit's Jot Touch pressure-sensitive sty us st l doesn't work proper y with Android

Wh le the screen is huge y impress ve, some art software can't qu te get ts head around the sheer number of pixels. When we put f ngertip to screen n Autodesk's popular SketchBook software we found it took a wh le for the tablet to keep up, espec al y when creat ng comp ex shapes. Adobe's Photoshop Touch ran far more smoothly, and t traced w th our ntricate f nger movements qu ckly and accurate y

Andro d software tends to be updated frequent y, so the SketchBook bug cou d be sorted in an upcoming version But it seems that Andro d st l hasn't entered artists collect ve consciousness in a way that App e has and wh e Adobe and Autodesk have both deve oped software for the platform it acks the awesomeness of ArtRage and Procreate

The Nexus 10 qu ck y became a web and enterta nment dev ce n our house but we'd st l hesitate in recommend ng it over the Pad for art sts The Andro d operat ng system is the best yet and the hardware is phenomenal – but it's not qu te up there w th OS for creative and artist c apps.

The Nexus 10's Gorilla Glass screen and rubberised finish make it feel especially robust

DETAILS

Features

Rating

COR LEONIS

This painter and writer wants artists to use Android tablets

What's the best thing about Android for digital artists?
I think Android offers more freedom. Tablets with pen pressure sensitivity such as the Galaxy Note 10.1 are starting to appear on the market, which is probably the most important feature to consider for digital artists.

What would you like to see improved next?
The next step is to improve this technology and make it even more realistic, such as what the Wacom Cintiq tablets offer, with up to 2,048 levels of pressure sensitivity and 40 degrees of tilt control. A wider range of art software would be welcome, too.

How do you think Android devices compare to similar Apple ones?
I find Android devices to be usually just as good, if not better, for a lower or comparable price, and Apple has no tablet that incorporates pressure sensitivity. Almost every iOS app has an Android counterpart and if not, they are (or should be) getting one. CGHub just released its app in December and it's awesome.

What made you choose Android over Apple?
Simply put, the openness and customisation possibilities of the operating system. If you're very visual, like me, you'll enjoy making your homescreen one-of-a-kind with various widgets. With minimum knowledge you can also root your tablet and install custom ROMs which are even faster and more efficient than the original OS.

What do you primarily use the tablet for, other than art?
It's great for all kinds of stuff, from syncing emails to gaming. I mostly use it to read digital comics and get news alerts, but there are tons of great apps out there for whatever needs you may have.



A former officer in the Canadian army, Cor is now a concept artist, illustrator, comic artist and author

www.corleonisworld.com



Massive Black: Volume Two

HIGH CONCEPT Prepare to admire and be envious of Massive Black's talented pool of dedicated artists

Editor Publisher Price
Web Available

You've probably seen some of Massive Black's creations without even realising it. The San Francisco company has provided concept art for AAA games such as inFamous, Red Faction: Armageddon and Silent Hill: Shattered Memories, as well as Hollywood blockbusters Transformers and GI Joe. It's also worked in advertising and on its own projects.

The book's syndicative of Massive Black's incredible productivity, and follows 2009's similarly epic Volume One. As Chris Hatala, the company's co-founder, points out, its focus has changed from 3D to 2D in the intervening years. "While we have plenty of concept art and illustration here in volume two, you won't find any client 3D work.

Massive Black has got to the top of its clients' concept artists for good reason. It has an innate understanding of what they want. The redesign of inFamous 2's protagonist, Cole, depicts him variously as a shaven-headed cyber warrior or a techno-bike-courier, before settling on the latter. There are some 27 images of the single character in his guises, and it's explained that there was much back-and-forth between Massive Black and developer Suckerpunch.

Well-written copy accompanies the concept art, explaining how Silent Hill's characters were designed with Andy Warhol in mind, and how a female robo-motorbike from Transformers 2 recalled mythological femme fatale Medusa. The massive amount of work that goes into character and vehicle design is a recurrent theme, with Massive Black altering tiny details such as the broadness of a characters' nose at the client's behest.

Thanks to the protracted development cycles of games, Massive Black sometimes creates concept art for products that never reach fruition. An untitled Sega project is detailed here, and it looks utterly fascinating, combining God of War's grandiose monsters with copious amounts of male and female nudity. A similarly doomed Konami game is equally intriguing, with bonkers ideas such as cyber-giraffes and evil-eating steampunk octopi.

The final part of the book deals with Massive Black's advertising work for British Gas and Hasbro, and its own game projects *Zombie Playground* and Mothhead. The former deals with teenagers battling an undead invasion; while the latter's protagonist is a tiny humanoid with an insect instead of a head. Both show that the company is capable of creating its own unique work outside of commissions and concepts.

RATING ✍✍✍✍✍

Further reading...

Game art is compared to The Masters, and a modern master shares his work

Drawing Basics and Video Game Art

Author Chris Solarski
Publisher Watson-Guptill **Price** $25
Available Now
RATING ✍✍✍✍



Chris Solarski finds canny parallels between fine art and games while constructing tutorials for anyone who'd like to create art for interactive entertainment. The accessible tome mirrors Cambiaso's The Baptism of Christ with Crysis 2's muscular protagonist and puts Waterloo's Man and a Woman on a Hammock side-by-side with post-apocalyptic shooter Rage. It's a slightly jarring approach, but it's one that works in teaching the principles of character and location design.

We've long been proponents of the idea that games can stand as high-brow artworks, in comparing Porta's vision Gados with Botticelli's The Birth of Venus the argument has never looked more convincing.

Elysium: The Art of Daarken

Author Mike "Daarken" Lim
Publisher 3DTotal Publishing **Price** £13
Available Now
RATING ✍✍✍✍✍



In fitting with Mike Lim's pseudonym, Elysium is a dark compilation of the artist's work, with the pages resplendent in their deep grey hues. His art, too, is rather murky, but its brilliance and his versatility both shine through.

Daarken can turn his hand to just about anything from conceptual character creation for fantasy sagas such as World of Warcraft, to a collection of personal works to raise funds after his wife's diagnosis with cancer. Daarken is still overjoyed at the fact that he's working on the fantasy games he loved as a child.

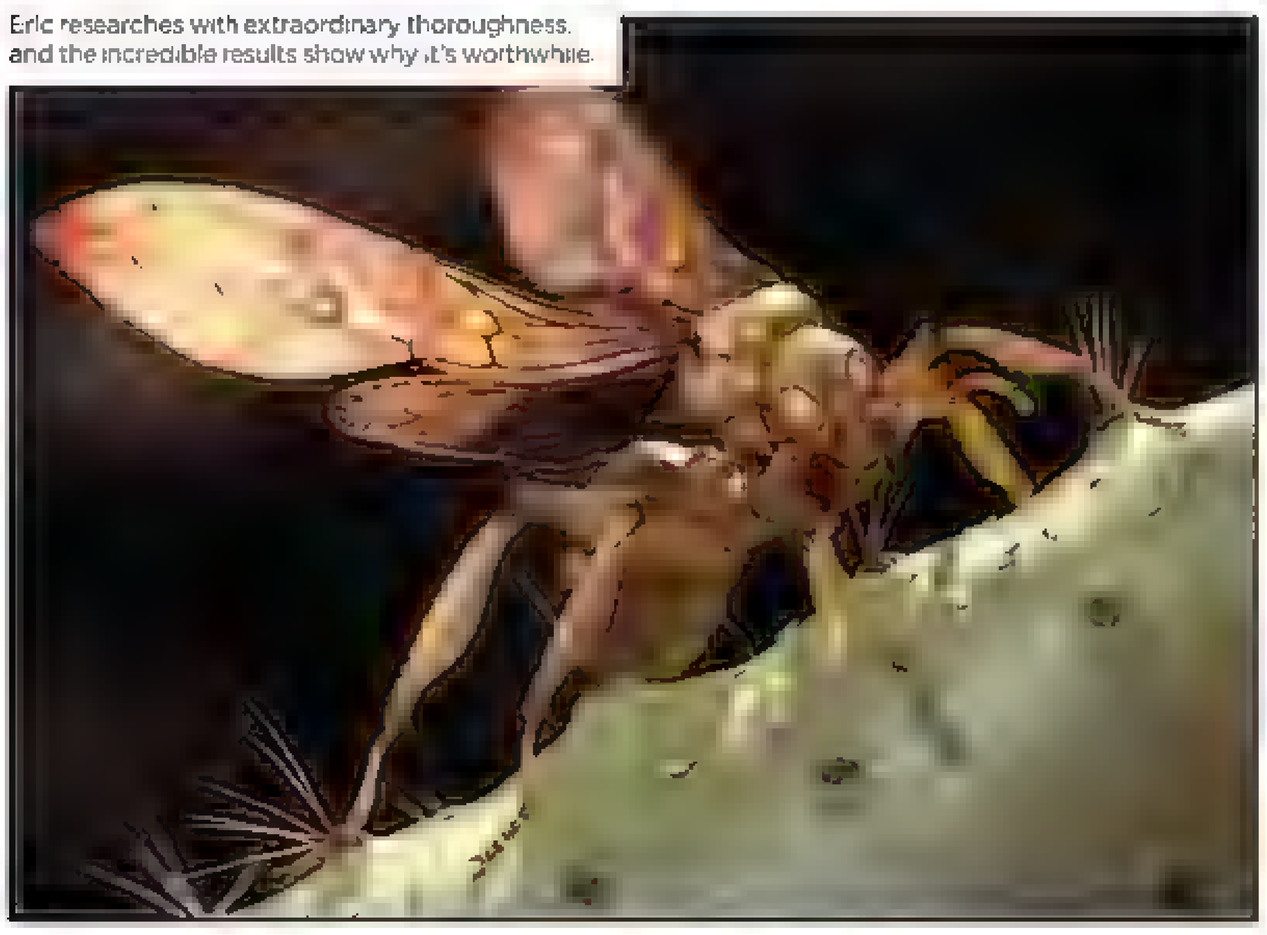
It's inspirational stuff neatly treading the line between personal and commercial works. The book concludes with a breakdown on how he created the cover, which serves as both a solid tutorial and an insight into Daarken's dark mind.







Eric researches with extraordinary thoroughness, and the incredible results show why it's worthwhile.



As well as sharing his ZBrush process with us (images left and below) Eric also uses Maya for crucial tasks, such as lighting tests.



Hyper-real Insect Design

ATTENTION TO DETAIL CG artist Eric Keller offers a close-up look at creature design and construction in a mammoth seven-hour video

Publisher	Price	Format	Web

There are two stages in Eric Keller's creative process that make the creepy-crawlie on the DVD cover for this new Gnomon Workshop video look so real – even though it's his own, entirely fictitious, creation. Research and reference-gathering come first, as they should in any worthwhile project, followed by the application of that knowledge to create your artwork. This video's expansive seven-hour running time means that Eric spends plenty of time exploring both stages, taking the appeal of this workshop far beyond the creature artists you'd expect to benefit most.

You'll quickly get an idea of the extraordinary depth Eric goes into as he explains his research and reference phase. He doesn't just Google for photos and plunge into blocking out the assembles an entire historical timeline for the evolution of insects showing how they developed over millions of years, and collects insects so that he can check forms and textures first-hand. This enables him to design an imaginary creature with a rock solid internal consistency – something that could have existed at a specific time and in a particular region.

Eric uses the 3D digital sculpting tool ZBrush to create his insects. You see several hours of his workflow here which gives you an in-depth understanding not just of what key tools do, but when and how to put them to their best use. You'll also explore relevant features in Maya, including adding fine hairs to your insect, before rendering the result in V-Ray.

Don't be put off if that sounds like a high-end (and expensive) toolset for creating artwork. Eric relates his specific tools to the broader artistic principles he's following. Towards the end, for example, he relates his use of 3D lighting and rendering to the use of camera lenses in photography, revealing how his control over specular highlights and depth of field bring an appropriate sense of scale to his finished piece.

DETAILS

Topics covered

Rating

ERIC KELLER

Eric is a CG artist who creates animations and images for both entertainment and scientific industries. He's written several books on ZBrush and Maya, and teaches introduction to digital sculpting at the Gnomon School of Visual Effects. Through his work with Digizyme, Eric has recently been creating insect models and animations for renowned etymologist and author EO Wilson as part of the Life on Earth iBook project. Eric's professional and personal work take inspiration from the natural world and the study of comparative zoology.



www.bloopatone.com

Amid the blood and the shagging, the brilliant Peter Dinklage continues as 'Imp' Tyrion Lannister



Game of Thrones: Season Two

RETURN OF THE KINGS There's much more to this series than five k'ngs and one throne

Distributor | Certificate
Price | Available

While Peter Jackson spreads JRR Tolkien's The Hobbit thinly over three feature films, George RR Martin's medieval fantasy colossus continues its perfectly paced transition onto TV with its second 10-part series.

Old pa s Edda rd Stark and Robert Baratheon are dead The itt e shit king Joffrey (Jack Gleeson) s drunk w th power and even h s brutal mum Cerse Lann ster (Lena Headey) s hard pushed to stop h m beat ng up whores and nventing new ways to k l his subjects

As po sonous wh spers spread through King's Land ng, outside the War of the F ve K ngs ga ns momentum, the usurped Stannis Baratheon shags a sorceress to get a mag cal edge; Daenerys Targaryen drags her dragons across the far east towards her r ghtfu p ace on the Iron Throne and n the North the Night's Watch prepare for the coming w nter

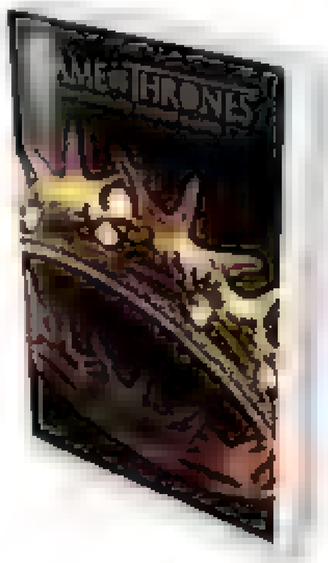
To dep ct a l these realms of fire and ce Irish art d rector Ashleigh Jeffers marshal ed an army of concept artists nclud ng K mberley Pope and the White Wa kers des gner Martin Rezard so each kingdom and character looks ngra ned n the Westeros world

Based on Martin's book A Clash of K ngs, the ser es shows ts heart among the massacres and shagg ng through severa Frodo and Sam friendsh ps, the itt e lord and his W ld ng servant; Cate yn Stark and woman warr or Brienne Tyrion Lannister and h s k ler n black, Bronn Daenerys and that old man who fanc es her.

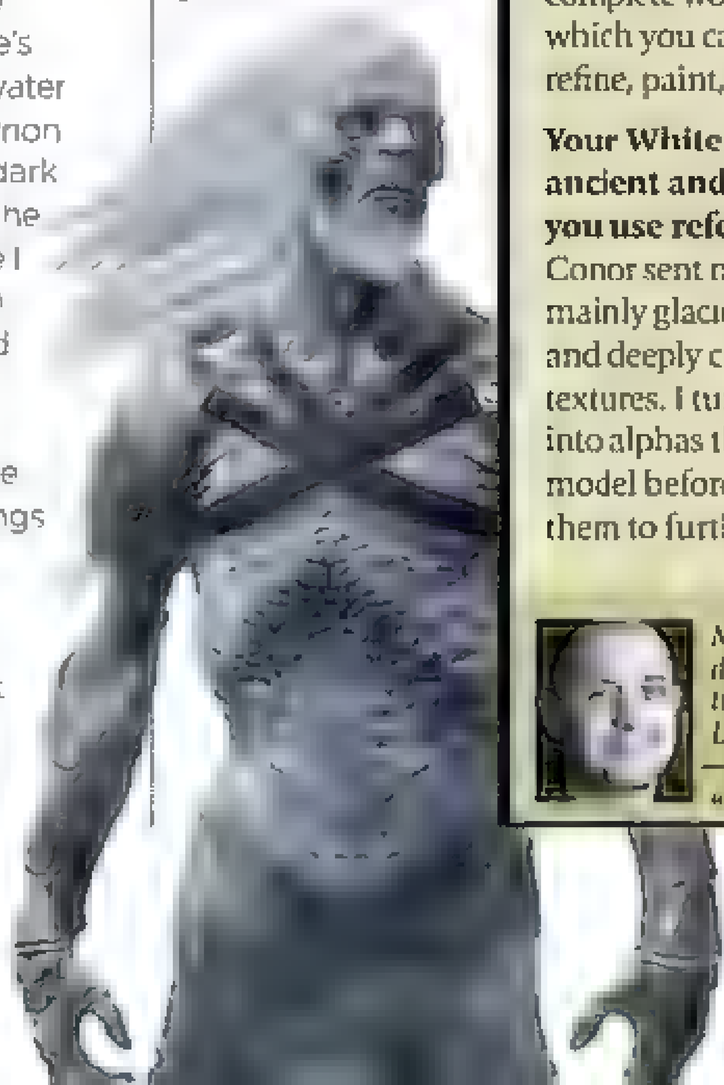
There's no Mordor c max though, nstead, the pen lt mate episode's Batt e of the Blackwater pits Hobbit s zed Tyrion aga nst k ng of the dark arts, Stann s With The Descent d rector Ne l Marshal at the he m heads ro and blood flows everywhere

Each ep sode s so adeptly made, that t's easy to watch the whole series in a coup e of s ttings ..ck y, w th the a ring of ser es three the same month as th s release, the more ravenous viewers won t have ong to wait unti their next nstalment

RATING ✍✍✍✍✍



The terrifying White Walkers were designed by Martin Rezard (see right), who used glaciers as reference



MARTIN REZARD

The 2D and 3D concept artist talks demon pregnancies

When did you start on GoT and what did you work on?
I started on it in July 2011 when Conor O'Sullivan, who's in charge of the prosthetics on the series, asked me to sculpt a pregnant belly for the birth scene at the end of episode four. Then Conor called me again to work on the White Walkers designs in November 2011. After the designs were approved, I went on to sculpt the prosthetic faces whi e Colin Shulver sculpted the body, hands and armour

What's the appeal for you?
I've been impressed by the high production value of the series – the dark tones, grittiness, the non-fantasy approach – so being able to be a small part of such a project was truly a joy. When I started working on the White Walkers I hadn't read the novel. I discovered them from the brief – they were very exciting characters to explore

Are strict briefs less-creative projects in your experience?
Not really. Often a strict brief enables you to be more refined and more to the point. Having no direction at the start can be a bit confusing and too open for me.

What software and hardware did you use for your work?
I work on a 27-inch iMac with 16GB of RAM I use ZBrush and Photoshop. Coming from a traditional background, I like how ZBrush is very much like a complete workshop in a box, in which you can rough out, sculpt, refine, paint, pose, light and render

Your White Walkers look ancient and mummified. Did you use reference for them?
Conor sent me a lot of reference, mainly glaciers, with hard edges and deeply cracked patterns and textures. I turned some of them into alphas that I applied to the model before coming back over them to further refine

Martin has worked with digital art and sculpture for two decades in TV, such as Doctor Who, and films

www.mudpusher.com



Dante's redesigned hoodie look doesn't extend to his Devil Trigger fighting mode

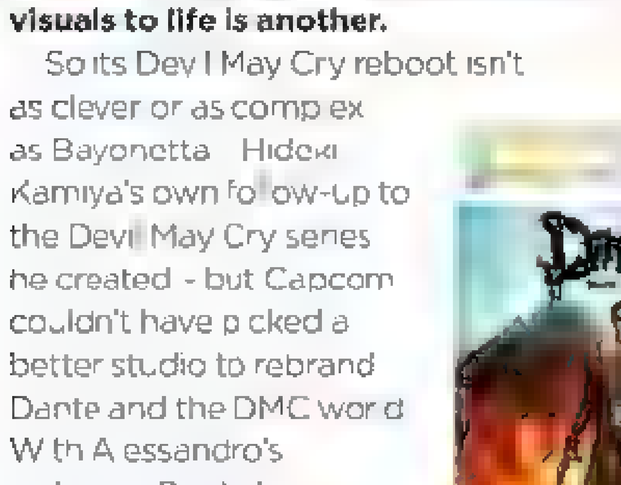
DmC Devil May Cry

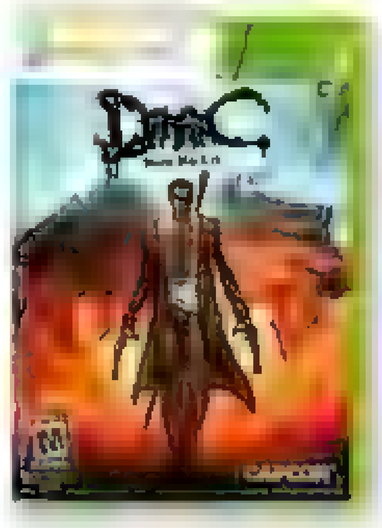
DEVILISHLY HANDSOME Ninja Theory's reboot shouldn't work, but it does – it looks like no other game

Format Publisher Price £40 Available Web

Ninja Theory has always made better art than videogames. Hiring Alessandro Taini is one reason; bringing a team together capable of bringing the Italian artist's visuals to life is another.

So its Devil May Cry reboot isn't as clever or as complex as Bayonetta – Hideki Kamiya's own follow-up to the Devil May Cry series he created - but Capcom couldn't have picked a better studio to rebrand Dante and the DMC world. With Alessandro's redesign, Dante has become a hoodie-wearing youth in a decaying world where demons take every possible shape, some maggot-like and torn from nature, others abstract and crystalline.





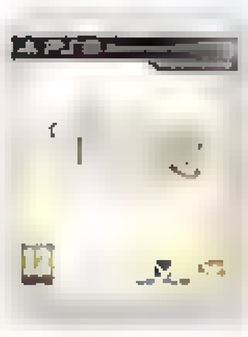
DMC's Limbo city is split in two. It's part sprawling American-esque metropolis with ornate buildings inexplicably torn from, well, somewhere in Europe, and part Limbo itself where the city's more benign characteristics are corrupted. Streets stretch into infinity, lamp posts bend and buckle, and entire buildings twist and distort beneath the demons' influence. Entire stages play out in shades of corpse green and blood red as Alessandro works his way around the colour wheel looking for every diseased demonic shade. None of this visual nonsense should work, yet it does, because Alessandro's art direction obeys such strict rules. It's muddled, but always muddled in the same way.

That Ninja Theory's technical artists have been able to keep up with Alessandro's abstraction shows just how far their mastery of Unreal 3 has come. His imagery is beautiful on the page, but the manner in which it's been so successfully turned into level design makes DMC one of the most visually striking games around.

RATING ★★★★★

Also look at...

LEVEL-5 and Ghibli collaborate, while school and demon fighting collide



Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch

Format PS3
Publisher Namco Bandai
Price £40
Available Now
RATING ★★★★★

The first video game collaboration between LEVEL-5 and Studio Ghibli, Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch is a largely traditional Japanese RPG, all random encounters and measured storytelling in that way it's reflective of Ghibli's own style. The game's curiously timeless, belonging to no particular era.

Ghibli's director of animation, Yoshiyuki Momose wanted Ni No Kuni to feel like stepping inside a Ghibli anime and the studio set about animating the game's cutscenes accordingly. Meanwhile at LEVEL-5, art director Noboyuki Yanai had to mimic Ghibli's style in three dimensions, simplifying designs and minimising lines to bring the cel-shaded world to life. Two-dimensional cutscenes animated by Ghibli and LEVEL 5's 3D world fit together so naturally and both sides have done their jobs so well it's as essentially a video game as it is a Ghibli story.





Persona 4: Golden

Format Vita
Publisher N. S America
Price £40
Available 22 February
RATING ★★★★★

As you play through an entire Japanese school year, you'll juggle classes and exams with midnight dungeon crawling and demon fighting. The game was unique back in 2008 on PS2 and remains unique in its Vita remake.

But similar to Ni No Kuni, the art's the star. Shigenori Soejima's character work is deeply stylised but rarely prone to excess. He obsesses over fashion and dresses his characters in (mostly) practical, stylised streetwear. It's only on the kids' superhuman Personas and the demons where Shigenori lets his pencils run wild. Demons, it seems, favour the abstract.



Persona 4 remains one of the best RPGs ever made and is one of the only video games where you'll find a properly recreated houndstooth pattern on a skirt. It's evidence of how Shigenori focuses on costume design as a storytelling art, to character designers that treating them as one and the same.



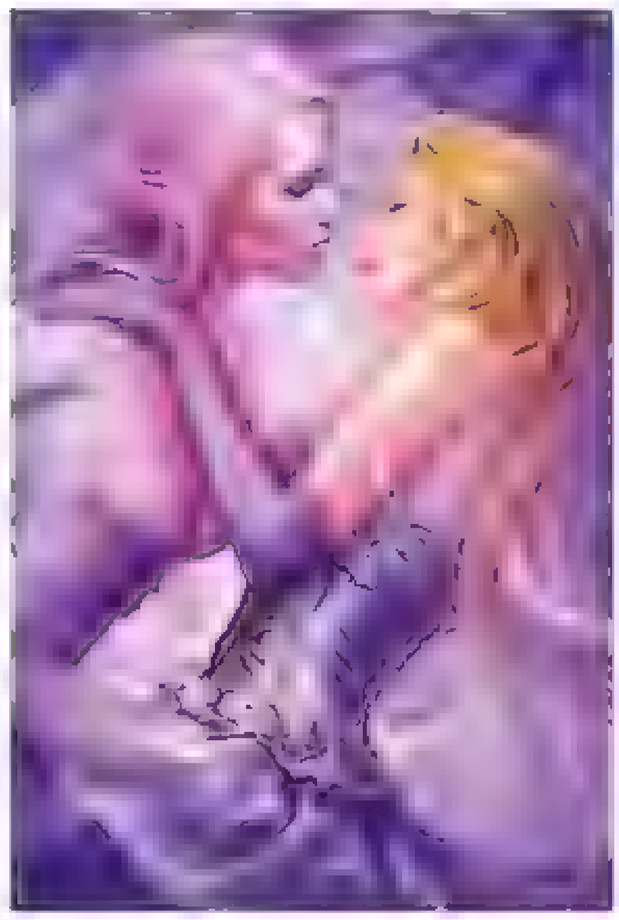
Balance GFX

BALANCING ACT This studio's colourful game art is underpinned by a desire to push into new territory

Shannon Maer founded Balance GFX with a clear aim of what he and his staff wanted to get from the studio, and what he could offer his clients. "The ability to leave a recognisable thumbprint on an array of diverse work leverages your ability to grow," he explains, "but what makes you unique is what captivates the imagination."

So, not working yourself into a corner of the industry, and always asking his artists to push themselves is the Balance secret for success. That, and a willingness to move into unfamiliar areas is essential in keeping a business alive, says Shannon. "The industry is always very competitive but I believe what makes us stand out is our refusal to compete. Competing implies that you alter the process of your work in response to what others are doing. Instead, we always do our best, and remain enthusiastic about bettering ourselves."

"Maintaining a willingness to evolve is always an industry leader's greatest challenge," he says. "The question 'where is it heading?' is always at the forefront in any industry. You can only speculate so much on where to apply your focus, but if you can't feed off that risk, you probably shouldn't be running a business of any kind." It was an attempt to combine the distinct areas of his life that inspired Shannon to start the studio in the first place. "'Without limitation' was really the blueprint that we were seeking. Work, life and art are usually categorised individually. It was important to have a name that implied our quest to unify these facets and convey an understanding of our creative ethic."

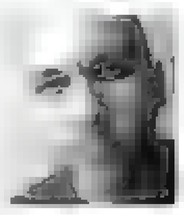


A promotional piece designed to highlight the tasteful yet alluring side of fantasy art

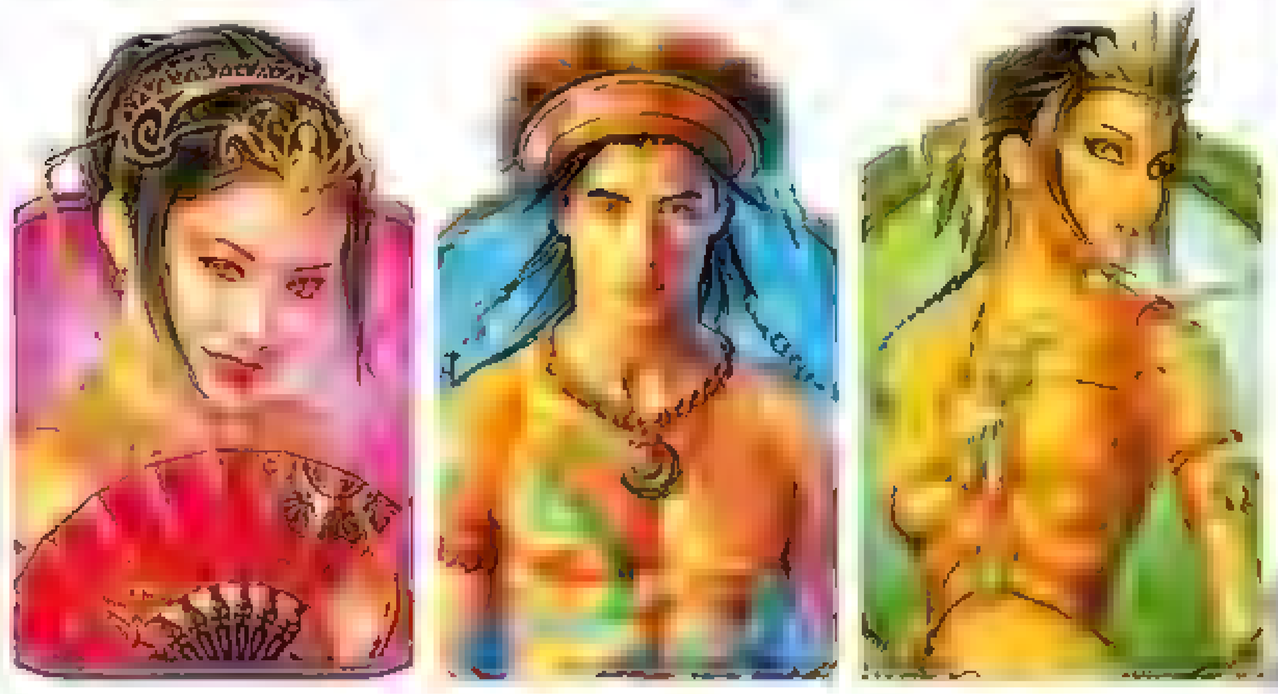


Gothic Nights is one of Balance's 'special projects' – a collaboration between a digital artist and a photographer to produce a distinctive series of pieces

Being based in New York has meant Balance have had a seemingly limitless source of talent to choose from. And with a strong team behind you imaginative open clients like WMS Gaming follow. The Balance team all have backgrounds in illustration and motion design which, suggests animator and designer Don Murphy, is especially helpful at the early stages of a project. Approaches may differ, but getting clear concepts communicated whether in marker pen or Photoshop, is imperative.



"After that," says Don, "we all practice effects in After Effects so that bringing off elements, whether at the



These three images were created for WMS Gaming's Far East Fortunes and Mystical Worlds just before being given to a 3D artist to animate



ARTIST INTERVIEW

MAX RATCHKAUSKAS

We speak to Balance GFX's resident techie about his day job



PROJECTS Far East Fortunes II, Wicked Beauty, Angel of Milan



How do you all complement each other's skills?
Working with Balance GFX is always a team process. I'm most comfortable behind the lens, or with my sleeves rolled up involved in technological needs. A well-oiled machine allows artists to focus on the ultimate objective, and that is delivering great art.

What does an artist need in a portfolio to get noticed at Balance GFX?
Originality is a really important part of it. In my case an eye for composition and presentation were key factors. Work needs to inspire and lift the imagination, and ultimately the people out in the field. Character design is the most crucial, and highly scrutinised, aspect of our work.

What work are you most proud of and why?
I've been fortunate to work on plenty of special projects here. Each one is an outlet for creativity. From entertaining video shorts, to original works of fine art, it's always a pleasure to work into an already tight schedule. And the time spent is always worth the sacrifice when you get to see the end results.

How much freedom do you have when working on a project?
At Balance GFX individuality is emphasised, so freedom of expression is encouraged as long as it fits within the clients' ultimate objective. It's a fun, challenging way to work. In my case, seeing to the needs of the GFX artists can be both a challenging and rewarding experience. Thinking outside of the box is always a requirement.

Why would you recommend working at Balance GFX?
The main reason would be the shear talent at Balance GFX. It is an environment that both encourages, and facilitates growth in every aspect of creative development.



Max specialises in photography, video production and system technology for Balance.

www.askmaxphoto.com



Originally created as an image without a background, Shannon felt he contained so much expression that he was inspired to fill the environment.



Shannon painted this image to "introduce some action adventure into our line-up".



Created for WMS Gaming's Wicked Beauty, this piece stands alone and fits in the game's full story.

© 2012 WMS Gaming Inc

"The community of concept artists is a supportive and encouraging one"



Here's another narrative piece of concept art that Balance GFX created, to expand the studio's repertoire to include adventure and romance.

start of the animating process or even in the middle, we're confident with each others skills, so that never becomes an issue."

But it's the basics that Don and Shannon still admire the most when looking through a portfolio. Dynamic composition, colour design and raw art ideas will, of course, get you noticed. But if there are shaky drawing foundations under any of these, your chances of making it in the industry will come crashing down.

Perfecting these skills is an infinite process, admits Don. "I keep sketchbooks on my coffee table and on my nightstand. And my advice to any aspiring artist is to draw from life whenever you can. And foster relationships with your contemporaries in the industry. After all, the community of concept artists is an extremely supportive and encouraging one."

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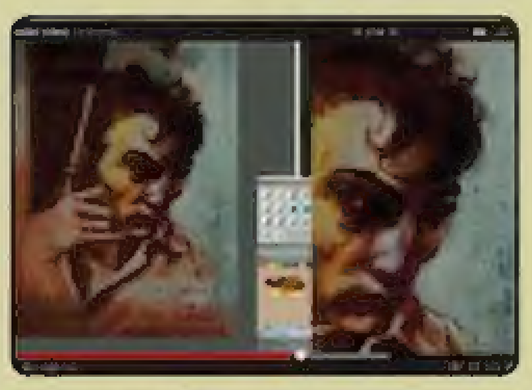
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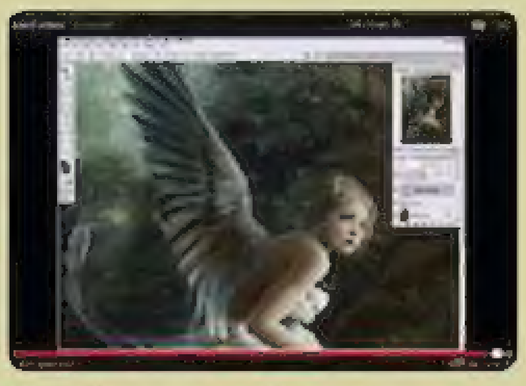
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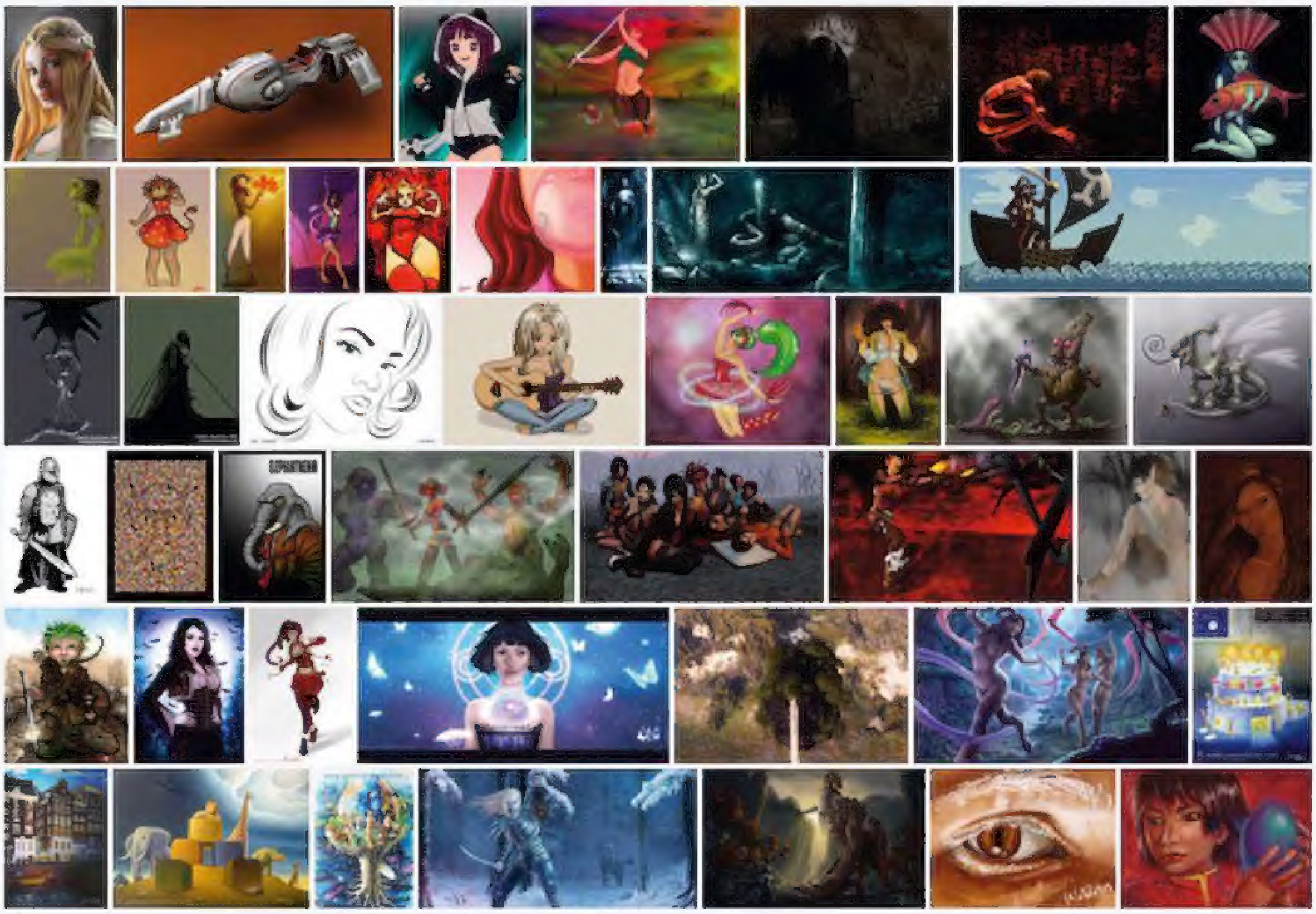
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Pirates

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